WOMEN OF THE CELL AND CLOISTER

ETHEL ROLT-WHEELER

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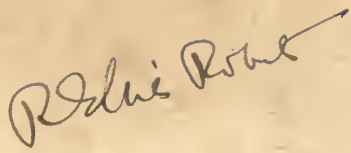

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WOMEN OF THE CELL AND CLOISTER

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ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

From the contemporary portrait by Andrea del Vanni

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WOMEN OF THE CELL AND CLOISTER

BY

ETHEL ROLT-WHEELER

"Mais les plus exaltés se dirent dans leur coeur:
'Partons quand même, avec notre âme inassouvie,
Puisque la force et que la vie
Sont au delà des vérités et des erreurs.'
Toute la vie est dans l'essor."

ÉMILE VERHAEREN

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO
MY MOTHER
AND
MY FATHER

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WOMEN OF THE CELL AND CLOISTER

ST MARY OF EGYPT

The Desert

ASCETICISM is kin to the desert. The gleaming wastes of the desert offer no entanglements for the senses ; no change of season disturbs its unbroken monotony. The soul that is striving after the absolute gains support from the desert silence, the desert solitude, the desert immensities. Space so vast that it seems to create an extension of vision ; light so intense that it thrills new faculties into life ; air so virgin that you would say it must blow from the very fount of Purity itself—all these contribute to sustain the high level of contemplation ; while the cruelties of the desert—its heat, its aridity, its thirst—serve as whips to scourge the desires of the flesh and to discipline the body into submission and obedience.

The annihilation of the lower self was the aim of the mystic, both Pagan and early Christian ; and the desert was his chosen place of abode. The ascetic life, therefore, involving conviction of sin and purification by means of penance, is best studied in the desert, where it flourished most extensively. For the desert is symbol of a beauty not dependent on the changing loveliness of the year, but on immutable spaces and light eternal.

This beauty of the desert, which has found its most perfect description in modern times, must insensibly have affected the thoughts and aspirations of the ancient Fathers. Green, the colour of life, that in Northern climes lays soothing touch upon weary eyes and brain, was absent from the picture ; unless, indeed, the vivid emerald of the garden of Egypt entered into the anchorite's distant perspective, intensified in tone by the black Nile, and perhaps by a flash of dark blue sea. In that air of telescopic clearness, the far mountains burned with the glow and definition of missal illuminations—incandescent scarlet and flaming violet ; the very stones of the desert, amid the pale undulations of sand, shone orange and amber and black and purple, as if they were damp with water. White stones, heaved up by some convulsion at the beginning of time, assumed through incalculable ages strange and stranger shapes : they peopled the place with shadows of fearful intensity. But not always was the desert sharp-cut in outline ; sometimes the mountains would become uprooted, and float, pink and lilac, in blue haze ; or liquid mists of grey-rose, or molten gold would fill the wastes with a soft or dazzling glory. The effect of such scenes on the mind can only be described in paradox. In these vast solitudes and unbroken silences man felt himself infinitely little and infinitely great ; the changing splendours, divorced from all human occupations and human needs, crushed, and at the same time exalted him.

In Egypt, that land of gigantic contrasts, the town

and the desert lay side by side in startling juxtaposition—the world of the flesh and the world of the spirit impinged so sharply that you might stand with one foot in the green paradise of sensuous things, and one in the golden and burning sands of spiritual endeavour. For the soil of Egypt is so fertile that the tiniest trickle of a stream and a few grains of seed produce an abundance of vegetation, while beyond the reach of the waters, sudden desert stretches in unbroken aridity. On the one hand, safety, comfort, ease, companionship; on the other, the dreadful unknown.

It is a little difficult for us in the present age to realize the terrifying adventures which the desert presented to the imagination of the early solitaries. Bodily hardship did not daunt them, nor even the peril of wild beasts; but it required a sublime courage to go forth into a region inhabited by strange monsters and haunted by powerful demons. The light of the desert exaggerated proportions, distorted appearances; harmless bushes and animals assumed malignant shapes; excited imagination peopled the unexplored vasts with horrors.

But granting the high spirit and noble purpose of the Christian solitaries, we may pause to ask: What had the extreme penances the hermits practised, the rules by which they guided their lives, their fierce combats with fiends, to do with the teaching of Christ and his apostles? It was the social and not the solitary virtues that Christ preached; extremes of asceticism have no recognized place in the Gospel.

Asceticism, however, was one of the most powerful traditions of the pre-Christian religions of the East; for centuries Buddhist hermits had made the desert their place of abode, and the Jewish sect of the Essenes was dispersed over Syria and Egypt. Even Stoicism and Neoplatonism contained elements of asceticism. Purification was held by the mystics of every creed to be the first step in the spiritual life. Detachment from things of the sense and mortification of the flesh were not practised as ends in themselves, but were regarded as mere stages, sometimes as brief stages, on the path to illumination, to perfection. Little wonder that Christian converts, quickened by a new revelation of the Deity and a new consciousness of the importance of the soul, should have followed the traditional road in their searchings after God.

The climate of the East made possible the existence of recluses in large numbers. In Egypt the air is so sustaining that the body can subsist on the very scantiest food. The Christian hermits were content with a little bread and water, and often food was not touched till sunset-time. We read of a solitary who lived on one grain of rice a day. Salt, herbs, oil, a fig, a date—these were regarded as luxuries to be but rarely partaken. With regard to shelter, the desert offered many natural and artificial caves and galleries. Its stone is principally limestone, which, under the action of time and weather, rises into fantastic shapes, and curves into hollows. The desert is full of holes and caverns, which, with some slight additional labour from the hand of man, become possible

dwelling-places. The hermits also took up their abode in abandoned subterranean cells and galleries made by the ancient Egyptians for temples or for tombs. Some anchorites, however, disdained a roof, and slept always in the open. A community of solitaries in the great Syrian desert lived thus on the mountains without any shelter, meeting daily for prayer and praise. They ate no bread ; each had a small sickle with which he cut a few wild herbs for his sustenance.

St Antony the Great (251-356) is generally accounted the founder of Egyptian monachism. Before his time there were indeed Christian recluses in the desert, and even communities of hermits ; but his memory towers above that of his predecessors, and his story has vital elements in it that have kept it alive to the present day. So his figure makes a convenient landmark—though he was no "founder," in the technical sense of the word. His sounding example, his widespread fame, drew many an ardent disciple to the desert, and these naturally wished to build their little huts in the neighbourhood of so great a saint. Thus spontaneously an organization grew up, its members following at first each his own rule, each working at some self-imposed labour, as the plaiting of mats or the making of ropes, and uniting only for common worship. As time went on, such loosely strung organisms developed into the disciplined monastery.

The keynote of the ascetic life, as conceived by St Antony, is to be found in the answer he gave to

some heathen philosophers who came to visit him on Mount Colzim. His encounter with these dialecticians shows us that, unlettered as Antony was, his mind was equal in acuteness to theirs. "You boast of the proofs which you produce, and require also that we should not honour God without proofs," he said, "Tell me, therefore, how is the true knowledge of all things, and above all, the knowledge of God, attained? Is it a knowledge through instruction, or a knowledge springing immediately from the power of faith? Which is the most ancient, knowledge through reason or knowledge through faith?" The philosophers replied: "Knowledge through faith is the most ancient." "You have rightly answered," said Antony, "for faith arises from the direct application of the soul to divine things; and dialectics are only the science of making inferences about divine things by reflection and abstraction . . . therefore knowledge through faith is surer and more sublime than your sophistical conclusions."

The direct application of the soul to divine things. The very latest exposition of philosophy does no more than express Antony's position in modern terminology. Religion still rests upon this dictum of Antony. "It is in the moral and spiritual sciences as it is in the physical and mathematical," says Cardinal Manning, "We must have axioms to start with, and unless we possess certain principles of truth which are in themselves evident, and anterior to all reasoning, we have no starting points, and the mind is unable, not only to make progress,

but even to set out on its activity. . . . The knowledge of God gives the axioms of the spiritual life, and of the knowledge of self."

The desire for knowledge of the divine and communion with the divine was at bottom the lure that drew men in their tens of thousands to the wild places. It is computed that the number of Egyptian monks in the year 395 was seventy-six thousand; and of nuns, twenty thousand, seven hundred. Communities of hermits were called Cænobitic, and the brothers of such orders wore a long linen robe with a woollen girdle round the waist: over it was thrown a cloak of sheepskin. Sandals were only resorted to in extreme rigours of heat and of cold.

Not only were the rules of life which were adopted by Christian hermits based on Eastern traditions of monachism: the very gods and goddesses of Pagan worship were incorporated into the Christian system. For the early Christians did not hold the ancient deities disproved out of existence: they were only deposed. They were entities still, powerful and terrible, demons, antagonists of God, to be conquered—if faith were strong enough to conquer—by the sign of the cross or the word of Christ. True, the Pagan idols were only stock and stone, but they represented realities—an ever-present danger, a continual menace to the struggling soul. In the "Life of St Anthony," by St Athanasius—that book which, as we read in the "Confessions," led to the conversion of St Augustine—we find the first extant sermon on Demonology, probably an interpolation, but inter-

esting as showing the unshaken hold which the Pagan religions still exercised over Christian converts, and the explanation adopted by Christian teachers. St Antony's own life gives us a most illuminating illustration of the methods assigned to demons, and the clashing warfare necessary for victory over them.

But amid these frightful combats with the fiends, amid the sharp pangs of the flesh and spirit, the harsh and terrible penances extending over decades, the frosts and the burnings, spiritual as well as physical, the story of Christianity shone out with soothing and tender light. The hermits lacerated their own bodies, and endured excruciating pains; but, unlike the Religious of later times, they dwelt in imagination, not upon the agony of the Crucifixion, but upon the glory of the Resurrection. The visions they had of Jesus were visions of delight: the scorn poured by the heathen upon their crucified God led the early Christians to lay emphasis upon the joy and the victory, the hope and the promise of their faith. It has been pointed out that in the catacombs—those refuges from brutal injustice and hideous persecution—we find no symbols that are not peaceful and radiant. The Lamb and the Good Shepherd are represented, vintage and harvest scenes, flowers and palms and doves; but the agonies of death and the terrors of hell are the work of a later and more morbid generation. The cross itself appears but rarely in early Christian art; and the crucifix, with the dead figure of Christ upon it, is not

found till the tenth century. Monks of other ages have undergone penances as great as those of the Egyptian hermits, but they have been taught, not merely to submit the body to physical pain, but to dwell upon it continually in imagination, and so their visions sometimes lack the sweetness, the bliss, the illumination, of those whose minds were set rather upon celestial things.

Not always, however, were the Egyptian monks animated by a spirit of gentleness, of lovingkindness. After a generation or so, when the first enthusiasm for divine things had waned, the solitary life was apt to breed bigotry. Isolation from the world induced a spirit of ignorance, harshness and violence. This is not the place to trace the development of fanaticism, or to show the monks of Nitria raiding Alexandria and murdering Hypatia : our concern is with the simple devotees of earlier times.

A few of them fled from persecution—St Paul of Thebes, for instance, said to be the first Christian hermit—but most of them fled from a dying world—a world of hopelessness and despair. The great Roman Empire was tottering to its fall, displaying in hideous phases all the symptoms of corruption and rot. The old Roman virtues of duty and patriotism were dead ; money, pleasure, dissipation, were the sole objects of life. Positions in the state were closed except to the basest intriguer ; appointments were made by favourites and the creatures of favourites. An inordinate luxury without refinement, flaunting vices and degenerate cruelty—such were

the characteristics of the cities. Weariness and depression weighed upon mankind ; art and literature languished ; over all was the decadence of languor and disease. Among the Christians themselves, when the time of persecution was over, was a din of never-ending controversy, a fierce warfare of words and subtleties, unutterably fatiguing to the spirit. A mere recitation of the various sects and their various doctrines leads the mind into a whirlpool of bewilderment. The Arians, who held that the Parent Deity was prior to the Son, and that at a time inconceivably remote the Son was begotten by an act of sovereign will ; the Nestorians, who claimed Mary as the mother of God ; the Priscillianists, who adopted doctrines of Dualism ; the Monophysites, who maintained that the human and divine were so mingled in Christ as to be inseparable ; the Manichæans, whose vast system was a blend of Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Buddhism—these were but a few of the sects whose divisions of opinion deluged whole countries with blood.

No wonder that the still small voice of God could not be heard among this babble of tongues ; no wonder that the earnest man fled into the wilderness that he might possess his soul in peace. Controversy pursued him even there — Athanasius sent for Antony when that solitary was over one hundred years old, to help him in argument against the Arians —for Athanasius was their most vigorous opponent ; though his so-called creed was not in existence till two centuries later. But the solitary could return

once more to recollection, to contemplation, to peace : he could at least keep burning in the desert the flame of spiritual endeavour, extinguished by the materialism and the bigotry of the towns ; and even his sensational penances served to awaken men to the reality of the life unseen, the all-importance of the soul. St Simeon Stylites on his pillar ninety feet high, engaged in genuflexions which to us appear either absurd or insane, stood symbol to the people of his time of the victory of spirit over matter ; and Mary of Egypt, burnt out of all semblance of womanhood by the desert sun, was worshipped in her own and succeeding ages for a holiness that transcended the body and reached to a mystic union with God.

The Penitent

We vision the city of Alexandria in the fourth century enclosed between its walls and the azure sea, a teeming hive of multifarious life. Here was the centre of the intellectual activity of the Roman world ; here East and West met on common ground. Here the old world battled in its death-struggle with the new ; here ancient philosophies and nascent speculations hurtled in wild confusion. Alexandria was a very chaos of beliefs, opinions, theories, aims, ambitions, aspirations—of exaggerations generated by disintegration, and of faiths struggling through fanaticism. The very architecture of the streets was a jumble of antagonistic

ideas, where Egyptian obelisks rose beside Greek temples of Corinthian columns. No city of to-day offers a parallel in diversity of population. Greek and Indian, Jew, Egyptian, Negro; the daintily perfumed heathen philosopher, the priest of Osiris, with panther-skin on his shoulders, the Roman soldier, the desert monk, the Gothic barbarian, wove a many-coloured pageant of fiercely contrasting strands.

Out of this welter of peoples and creeds three factions assumed alternate dominance—the Jews, the Pagans and the Christians. Sharp-drawn as are the distinctions between these contending factions, each of them contained within itself contrasts almost as striking. Within the Christian fold, flaunting luxury and incredible asceticism went side by side. Take, for example, the following types of Christian worshippers. We see the rich lady set down at the church in a magnificent litter borne by slaves; her false hair, dyed gold, is dressed to an inordinate height; her face is painted; chains and rings jingle all over her person, and her silk dress is embroidered with subjects from Scripture, the Marriage of Cana or the Paralytic carrying his Bed.

Not chains for ornament but chains for penance wear down another type of Christian devotee. The virgin recluses, Marana and Cyra, lived for forty years in a mandra—that is, a space surrounded by a wall but open to the elements. Their frail bodies, exposed to all weathers and worn by fasting, were weighed down by heavy chains round neck, waist,

hands and feet. Shrouded in long veils, they spent their time in prayer and penance. But though these anchoresses won the admiration of the bishops and the people of their time, they have failed to impress the popular imagination of succeeding ages. Self-inflicted punishment for sin is comprehensible to the meanest intelligence, and appears in the light of justice ; but self-inflicted punishment for sinlessness is to many lay minds a morbid outrage. Mary of Egypt, wanton of Alexandria, is the saint, not Cyra or Marana—Mary of Egypt, who stands associated in popular veneration and affection with Mary of Magdala ; Mary of Egypt, whose memory is still so green that chapels are to-day raised in her honour in Paris, and frescoes painted showing forth her life.

We see her first, a vital element in Alexandria's fierce life of luxury and vice, a nature even then intense, burning, ardent, following money and pleasure with the same reckless abandonment that she afterwards showed in following holy things. There is a story, not of Mary of Egypt, but of another saint, Pelagia of Antioch, which illustrates very clearly the attitude of the nobler members of the church to women of that class. Nonnus, the Bishop of Edessa, was preaching at St Julian's Church at Antioch. So great was the concourse of people gathered to hear him that the doors of the church had to be left open. Suddenly, in the dark framework of the door, lit by clear Eastern light, he saw a sharp vision of beauty—a woman riding on a white mule with golden trappings, who reined in for a moment

and peeped with idle curiosity at the assembled worshippers. Her hair fell from her diadem down to her feet, and her rich apparel sparkled with jewels. Unmindful of the Bishop and his sermon, all the congregation turned round to look on her, for this was the famous Pelagia, chief singer and dancer of the theatre of Antioch. The bishops discreetly closed their eyes from beholding vanity—all except Nonnus, who gazed long at the woman, and gazed after her when she had passed with her train of magnificent servitors. After the sermon was over, the good Bishop was much troubled in his mind, for he read in Pelagia's passing a reproach for his own slackness. "This woman," he thought, "has trained her body in all graces and decked it with all attractions: I take less pains to win the favour of God, than she to win the favour of man." So in deep abjectness of spirit he cast himself on the ground, and prayed God's forgiveness. But at night there came to him, in a vision, a larger reading of the lesson. This was the dream that he related to his deacon the next morning. "When I was celebrating the Holy Mysteries," he said, "I was vexed almost past bearing by a white dove, terribly soiled, which kept fluttering and flying about my head. Greatly it disturbed me when I gave my blessing at the end of the Holy Mass. At last I caught it and dipped it in the vase of holy water that stands at the entrance of the church. Then the dove became white as snow, and flew so high above me that I could no longer follow its flight."

A white dove, terribly soiled. By this symbol we know that the true spirit of Christianity still had its being amid the crash of controversy and creed, of faction-fight and riot and murder: the spirit that distinguishes Christianity from other noble religions, and that makes it pre-eminently the religion of the poor, the desolate and the oppressed. For this woman, dragged in the mire of a great city, is visioned under the holy image of the Spirit—soiled and darkened, it may be, but still divine. So with tender love Nonnus thought upon Pelagia as a child of God, despite her sin and shame. So with tender love the Christians of old times, following the example of their Master, have thought upon Mary Magdalene. Of all sinners, she was the first to be pardoned by Christ, the first to shed bitter tears at his cross, the first to have knowledge of his Resurrection. And in the universal devotion accorded to Mary Magdalene, Mary of Egypt shares; they stand constantly together in pictorial representation: Mary Magdalene young and beautiful and fairly clad, Mary of Egypt old and worn and in rags.

Among ancient documents we find an almost contemporary record of St Mary in a "Life of St Cyriacus" (died 556), written by his disciple Cyril of Scythopolis; and a romance in Greek called "The Acts of St Mary of Egypt," which is founded on this mention of her, and on the legends which have gathered about her name. The "Acts" are themselves ancient enough, dating back as far as the seventh century, and they are supposed to have been written by St

Sophronius, patriarch of Jerusalem (died 639). If Sophronius was indeed the author, he was a man highly gifted as a narrator ; for the story, as he tells it, is full of colour and atmosphere, of dramatic surprise and tender feeling. Let us first give briefly the framework on which he worked—the only authentic allusion to Mary, which occurs in the "Life of St Cyriacus." It is a simple tale that the monk has to tell, general in feature, and lacking individuality ; it would cover the life of many a recluse who lived and died unnoted in those desert wilds. One day it chanced that two disciples of St Cyriacus, who dwelt in the desert beyond Jordan, wandered farther into the wilderness than they had ever been before ; and they saw a human being moving among the bushes ; but when they approached, it disappeared. Thinking this must be some snare of the evil spirit, they prayed against temptation ; later they found the creature again in a cave, but it cried to them not to come near, for she was a woman and was naked. They questioned her who she was, and she replied that she was a public sinner named Mary, who had led many into evil : but she had repented her sins and had fled to the desert to do penance. When they came again they found her dead in her cave ; and they brought spades and buried her where she lay. Such is the framework on which the writer of "The Acts of St Mary" wove his story.

The cave in which Mary lived was her cell of penance, her "cell of self-knowledge." She was

THE LIFE OF ST. MARY OF EGYPT

As represented in a stained glass window in the Cathedral at Bourges

not enclosed, like her contemporaries who dwelt in mandras, or the anchoresses of later times ; her cell was merely a self-appointed place of shelter and of prayer. Almost all classes of Egyptian hermits, as we have pointed out, had their cells in natural or artificial caves, or in the ancient temples and tombs that abounded in the desert : but the thought of this woman absolutely alone in such a solitude is terrifying to the imagination—especially after reading " The Acts of St Mary," which give her a personality vivid and individual.

In these " Acts " we have scenes of extraordinary dramatic power ; Alexandria, the City of Pleasure, Jerusalem, the City of Salvation, stand actual and yet symbolic before our eyes. The story is told with delicate skill and a most sweet tenderness, with abundance of detail, so that it lives before our eyes ; and it is small wonder that it captured the imagination of succeeding ages, especially as miraculous occurrences were interwoven in the fabric and added to its popular appeal. A Latin translation of the " Acts " was made in the eighth century, and versions exist in Anglo-Saxon and in ancient Spanish. Here is the story :

There dwelt in Palestine a monk named Zosimus, who from childhood had sought above all things else the love and service of God. And it seemed to him that he walked the way of perfection, and the seeds of pride grew in his heart. But there passed a stranger, who told him of a company of men beyond Jordan, serving God in a holier spirit than he. So

Zosimus set forth to find them, and, dwelling among them, he learned humility, and the evil of his self-esteem withered to the roots. Now it was the custom of these men to spend the solemn fast of Lent in solitude in the desert, separating one from the other on the first Sunday in Lent, and meeting again for prayer and thanksgiving on Palm Sunday; and of his practices during those days no man had to give account; and this was done that the weaker brethren might not be cast down, nor the stronger brethren puffed up with pride. So, having partaken of a light refection, and exchanged one with another the Kiss of Peace, they went forth into the wilderness, chanting a psalm, and dispersed in various ways.

Zosimus turned his face to the east, and for twenty days he wandered over the burning sands, and no creature or sign of life disturbed the silence or the solitude. But on the twentieth day, as he prayed, his face towards the east, and his hands uplifted to heaven, he saw, out of the corner of his eye, a rough, hairy thing, upright, like a human being. At first he thought it was a snare of the devil set to deceive him, but, taking courage, he looked more closely, and the thing fled, and he pursued it. Then indeed he saw that it was a human creature, with skin tanned black and hair turned white by the desert sun. His heart rejoiced within him, for he thought it to be some holy hermit. And he cried aloud: "Do not fly from me, most holy father, but stay and give me your benediction." Still the creature fled and clambered over a dry watercourse, and still Zosimus followed,

calling to it to stop. And when it had reached the other side of the watercourse it answered him: "Come no nearer, for the love of God, for I am a woman and am naked, but throw me over your cloak that I may clothe myself therewith." So Zosimus cast over his cloak, and turned away his eyes while she wrapped it about her. And when she was clothed, he, kneeling on his side of the watercourse, prayed for the blessing of this holy woman. But she, kneeling on the other side, craved his—"for thou," she said, "art a priest, and hast offered upon the altar the Holy Sacrifice." Much he marvelled that she should have this knowledge, and ever more earnestly he begged her benediction. She told him her story.

She was an Egyptian, and when she was twelve years old she fled from home to the great wicked city of Alexandria. There she became a player of musical instruments, and led a life of wantonness and sin. And after seventeen years she took passage on a ship that was carrying pilgrims to the Holy Land, and this she did, not that she might avail herself of the pilgrimage as a means of grace, but to introduce disorder and vice among the pilgrims. And in this evil design she succeeded only too well. Now when they were come up to Jerusalem for the great festival of the Exaltation of the Cross, she went as far as the church with the other pilgrims; but at the door an invisible barrier stopped her, so that she could not pass the portal. Then shame came upon her, and terror, and, kneeling before an image of the Blessed Virgin

that stood in a niche of the door, her own sin and blackness rushed upon her like a flood, and with bitter tears and anguished prayers she besought Mary to remove the barrier that she might enter the church and embrace the True Cross. And after she had prayed there was no longer any hindrance, and she crept in. And a Voice came to her, saying: "Pass over Jordan and there find peace." So, having communicated in the Church of St John the Baptist, she bathed her face and hands in the waters of Jordan, and went into the wilderness, taking a few loaves with her. Then Zosimus asked her how long she had dwelt in the desert, and she answered him forty-seven years, as she thought. For seventeen years she had suffered grievous torment and temptation from the desires of the flesh and the memory of her old life; she had suffered cold and hunger, and her garments had rotted and fallen from her. But at the end of that time she had found peace. And she prayed this boon of Zosimus, that he would come again next Lent, and bring with him the Holy Sacrament, and wait for her on the bank of the Jordan. When next Lent came, Zosimus was grievously sick, and could not go with the other brethren into the wilderness. But before the end of Lent he was well enough to set forth, taking with him the Holy Elements and a few dates and figs in a little basket. Night came, and he did not find Mary; but when the full moon had risen he saw her standing on the other side of Jordan. And she came across to him, and the waters upheld her. He gave her the

Kiss of Peace, and communicated her, promising that he would come again the Lent following, And when he came again he found her lying dead by Jordan, wrapped in the shreds of his old mantle. These words were traced in the sand: "Father Zosimus, bury here the body of the sinner Mary." But Zosimus was feeble and aged, and he had no spade. Then came out of the desert a lion, and with his paws made for the body a hole in the sand, and there Zosimus laid Mary to await the resurrection of the dead.

The tenderness of this story—its romance, its tragedy, its terror—have brought it very close to the affections and the imaginations of men. It has elements in it that appeal to all ages. The mediæval mind dwelt with delight and awe on its miraculous events. As the colours came soft and rich through the stained glass in the cathedral at Bourges or at Chartres, the worshipper watched the wonderful incidents of Mary's life set forth in concrete detail with stiff simplicity; his eye dwelt reverently on the three small loaves that Mary carried into the wilderness, and on the paws of the grotesque lion that dug the grave. One of the sweetest traits of the story, the reverence so unhesitatingly given by Zosimus to the holy woman, he would have accepted with perfect understanding. The crisis in her life, at once dramatic and spiritual, appealed to later and more philosophic times—that moment when a mysterious power held her back from entering the church at Jerusalem. In the Church of San Pietro-in-Pò at Cremona (where

relics are preserved, said to be those of St Mary of Egypt) there is a large picture by Malosso representing this subject ; and Ribera has also chosen it for one of his paintings. We of the present day, looking back upon that age, gorgeous with all the colours of decay, see Mary of Egypt a flame of zeal upon a burning background. She stands in startling contrast to Brigid of Ireland, the Mary of the Gaels, the subject of our next paper. Brigid was born into a young world, and all the freshness of Spring and of dew is in her story ; but Mary of Egypt had to be born again out of an old world and an old life of sin and shame and suffering. Brigid is of the " once-born," to use Francis Newman's pregnant phrase—she is the radiant virgin, pure in mind and body and soul ; full of joy and peace and hope. The Star is one of her symbols, the symbol of the First Initiation, the birth of purity into the world. But Mary of Egypt, wanton of Alexandria, is of the " twice-born " : she had to reach purity through hateful knowledge and bitter experience. She had to re-create her personality and that by action, not by thought : to purge away all the evil and harmful elements by means of detachment and penance. Her soul had to go through a new birth, the Second Initiation, symbolized by the baptism of water. The Church of St John the Baptist, and baptism in Jordan, are important elements in Mary's story ; and it is possible that the incident of her miraculous passage over Jordan has an esoteric significance. Nor in this connexion can we forget the poignant image of the

Bishop of Edessa, who visioned the woman of the town under the shape of a soiled dove : the symbol of the dove being the symbol of the Spirit and closely connected with the rite of baptism.

To-day we sigh in vain for such holy tenderness of insight into the darkest lives in all the world. For the worship of—even the interest in—the Magdalene, St Pelagia, Mary of Egypt, is not allowed to have any bearing on modern problems. Indeed, many are troubled to think that any sinner should reach heights of wisdom often denied to the righteous. Yet what infinite comfort has been experienced by tormented souls as they looked up at the glowing image of Mary of Egypt in the stained glass, from the thought that she understood their trials and temptations and anguish—that she had passed that way herself and knew its bitterness. Old and ugly and tortured, she was very close to common humanity, and yet she was a holy saint of God, and her victory and glory made possible the victory and glory of the meanest of mankind.

The sinner often has a passionate strength, an intense vitality unknown to more passive natures, and these qualities, turned with a fiery ardour of enthusiasm to divine things, achieve incredible victories. A profound knowledge of the depths may show the sublimities in truer proportion, and make possible that intimate sympathy with struggling and suffering man which can only be born out of experience. Christ the Sower—some hold—can sow best in ploughed ground :

"Lo, all my heart's field red and torn,
And thou wilt bring the young green corn : : .
The corn that makes the holy bread
By which the soul of man is fed,
The holy bread, the food unpriced,
Thy Everlasting Mercy, Christ."

ST BRIGID OF IRELAND

Milk

NO study of sainthood presents points of greater difficulty or of more absorbing interest than the study of St Brigid (or Bride) of Kildare. The living influence that she still exercises, not only over the peasantry, but over the mystics of Ireland, is due in part to the legends which connect her so intimately with the Christ-child that ancient writers call her the Second Mary, in part to her association with the pre-Christian goddess Brigid. To no other saint has tradition given assumptions so tremendous; no other woman has been crowned with the ideal of womanhood, both Pagan and Christian. For the sake of clearness, it seems well to treat the two aspects of Brigid—the Christian and the Pagan aspect—under the two symbols assigned her in traditional pictures, the symbol of Milk and the symbol of Fire. On the one hand we have Brigid the Milkmaid, Brigid the Saint, foster-mother of Jesus, invoked to this day by the Gaelic peasant women at the moment of childbirth; on the other hand we have Brigid the Bright, Brigid the Fiery Dart, holding a perpetual flame in her hand and with a column of fire rising above her head.

We look back into the past, and we see Brigid

standing afar on the threshold of Christianity ; only faintly we catch the glimmer of her white robe, for all about her are the misty dreams that have been woven by her lovers through the ages, and upon these play the red light of Pagan belief and the white light of Christian faith. It is very hard to reach, under these veils of glory, the woman of the fifth century, friend of the poor, counsellor of bishops and kings, foundress of a great monastery, a great school and a great city. We have to remember, however, that Brigid herself inspired the devotion that so magnified her, the intensity of fervour that could only find expression in highly charged images.

Few contrasts could be more striking than the contrast between the story of St Mary of Egypt and the story of St Brigid. The life of St Mary partakes of the nature of the desert—mentally as well as physically she suffers its fierceness and its burning. The life of St Brigid shines with the " healing of the White Peace " and the softness of dew; her white robe glimmers between the trunks of oak groves and over lush pasture fields, and she brings to all, with full hands, the gifts of quiet and of hope. The dandelion, " the little notched flower of Bride," peeps from the ground ; the linnet, " the little bird of Bride," pipes from the bushes. The riot of tempestuous life, the jagged edge of remorse, seem to belong by nature to that seething Oriental civilization under its merciless skies ; while Brigid the Bright moves fittingly in the pale and radiant air of Ireland athrill with the new life that beats to be free.

The story of Brigid is a story of beginnings and birth. Her day is set at the beginning of the year; she lives at the beginning of Christianity in Ireland; her symbol of Milk is the beginning, not only of physical, but, as we shall see, of spiritual sustenance as well.

The 1st of February is Bride's Day, when in the world of nature all is hush and expectation. Life in its completion is not yet, but there is a stir in the underworld of the roots, a swirl of green in twig and branch, and the far glow of purple. The tense stillness holds in bud and shoot, a dream, a promise, a glory; and all about one is the sweetness, the wonder, the mystery of a new birth. Brigid stands on the threshold of the Spring, unstained virgin and symbol of motherhood; the whiteness of blossom is about her; she puts her finger on the river, says the Gaelic Highlander, and the ice melts; she breathes upon the world and the Winter is gone. The very wood that she kneels upon at the altar, we read, making her profession as a nun, grows green and fresh at her touch.

The beginnings of Christianity in Ireland were marked by a like access of vitality, that blossomed into perfect fulfilment and developed unconquerable missionary zeal. The artistic impulse produced bell-shrines and missals and processional crosses unsurpassed in beauty and purity of imagination and craftsmanship; the missionary impulse drove the Irish overseas to Italy, Germany, France, Switzerland, and even to Iceland and Africa. St Columba, in 563, founded the great monastery of Iona; St

Aidan, in 634, evangelized Northumbria. Brigid also stands on the threshold of this Spring, artistic and missionary, stimulating its flower and fruit ; her school of metalwork at Kildare was famed for its exquisite production, and in her time a book of the Four Evangelists was illuminated in her monastery, rivalling in loveliness the Book of Kells. Though she never left Ireland, she made many journeys over it, and her disciples carried her fame from one end of Europe to the other. Her divine office was recited, not only in Ireland, England and Scotland, but in France, Belgium and Germany ; it is still met with in the missals and breviaries of Cologne, Maestricht, Mayence, Trèves, Wirtsburg, Constance, Strasbourg and other European towns.

Even before the coming of Christianity, Ireland was a civilized country with a highly organized social life. It possessed one of the completest codes of law in the world—the Brehon Law—so minute in its regulations that the " bee-judgments " alone—*i.e.* the law concerning the finding of swarms—occupy twenty pages of printed text. The Brehon Law regulated in detail the rights, duties and privileges of the various classes of the community, and, among other things, forbade, on pain of death, quarrelling at fairs, and made honourable provision for old age. The arts were cultivated in pre-Christian Ireland—copper, iron, lead, and possibly tin, were mined for, and worked into beautiful tools, weapons, utensils and ornaments. Music and poetry, too, were universally practised and appreciated. Christianity

did not interfere materially with social life as organized by the ancient Irish, but it woke a spiritual impulse and stimulated an artistic fervour that Pagan Ireland had not known.

Brigid is believed to have been about twelve years old when Patrick died. Many of the legends which connect Brigid and Patrick cannot, therefore, be historically substantiated. There are no contemporary authorities for Brigid's life, but in 1647 an Irish Franciscan Friar, Father John Colgan, published at Louvain, where he was residing, a volume containing six Lives of St Brigid, most of them being translations by himself into Latin from the original Irish. These tracts, of uncertain date, and sometimes mutually contradictory, consist chiefly of a recital of St Brigid's miracles. The most important is the work of Cogitosus, a Kildare monk, who wrote a Latin Life of Brigid at the desire of the community, prior to the close of the eighth century. These six Lives constitute the recognized sources of information, though there are many other Lives of the saint, Irish and Latin, in the libraries of Ireland and the Continent.

Brigid was born about the year 453, probably at Faughart, about two miles north of Dundalk, in the diocese of Armagh. Her parents were of noble blood, her father, Dubhtach, being related to Con of the Hundred Battles, and her mother, Brotseach, belonging to the noble house of Dal-Concobhair (O'Connor). They were Christians, probably converts of St Patrick. So says Cogitosus, but the third,

fourth and fifth Lives relate that Brigid's mother was a slave girl, driven from the house like Hagar, by Dubhtach's wife; and many modern authorities support this view. Brigid was from early years of a singular beauty and purity, and gifted with a spirit of wide charity. When she had reached the age of marriage she announced her intention of remaining a virgin, and on Usny Hill, West Meath, she was made a nun by the Bishop Maccaille or Maccaleus, who about the year 469 put a white cloak about her, and placed on her head a white veil. The ancient Irish nuns did not have their hair cut on profession, and it was the custom in ancient Ireland for both men and women to wear the hair long. Tradition always assigns to Brigid "yellow locks."

We cannot help contrasting the simple white habit of the Irish nuns with the peacock attire worn—against canonical decree, it is true—by their Saxon sisters. Ealdhelm wrote, in the seventh century, a treatise on Virginity for the sisterhood at Barking, in which, after inveighing against the extravagant costume of the monks, he describes the dress of the nuns as follows:—"A vest of fine linen of a violet colour is worn, above it a scarlet tunic with a hood, sleeves striped with silk and trimmed with red fur; the locks on the forehead and the temples are curled with a crisping iron, the dark head-veil is given up for white and coloured head-dresses, which, with bows of ribbon sewn on, reach down to the ground; the nails, like those of a falcon or sparrow-hawk, are pared to resemble talons."

But if the Irish nun did not wear the same diversity of colour, it is possible that she stained her nails crimson, as the fashion then was, and curled her hair elaborately, as did also the heroes and churchmen of Ireland.

When Brigid took the veil there were no definite religious orders in Christendom; monasteries sprang up independently, and followed the rule of any teacher they chose. Not till about the ninth century was the Rule of Benedict generally adopted. Brigid was placed, by the Bishop, in authority over the seven or eight maidens who professed at the same time as herself, and this was the beginning of her Rule, which was followed for many centuries in Ireland. She remained for some time at Usny, and the fame of her sanctity spread far and wide, so that maidens and widows thronged to her, desiring to be under her guidance.

In order to spread the teachings of Christianity, Brigid made many missionary journeys about Ireland. Nuns were not "enclosed" in early Christian times; indeed, as late as the twelfth century, and later, we find the nuns going about as freely as the monks. St Benedict, whose rule was drafted for women as well as for men, made no regulation about the enclosure of nuns, and though, later on, many founders of orders enjoined enclosure, this rule was generally dispensed with by permission of superiors, or ignored. Not till the Council of Trent, 1546—a thousand years after Brigid's time—was cloistration definitely enforced. Brigid was therefore free to go where she

pleased, and no ecclesiastic had the right to level at her the epithets hurled by the papal nuncio at St Teresa, of " gadabout," " restless, roving, contumacious, disobedient female." Apart from these reproaches, we are inclined to think that Brigid, in the fifth century, travelled more comfortably over Ireland than Teresa, in the sixteenth, over Spain. There were fair roads in Ireland, and causeways over the bogs ; rivers could be crossed by wooden bridges, or ferry-boats or fords ; at night-time the fords were often marked by lights. The Irish ox-waggons, the chariots with awnings of cloth dyed a bright colour or embroidered with feathers, were surely as comfortable as the Spanish covered carts without springs ; while the hospitality of Ireland was infinitely preferable to the wretched accommodation of the Spanish inns. Hospitality ranked as one of the highest virtues in Ireland, and there were actually free public hostels established for the entertainment of travellers. The official in charge was bound to keep one hundred of each kind of cattle, and one hundred labourers, with corresponding accommodation for guests. The kitchen fire was always to be alight, with a cauldron on it of boiling joints. We read in Keating's History that there were ninety of these hostels in Connaught, ninety in Ulster, ninety-three in Leinster, and one hundred and thirty in Munster. It would seem clear that Brigid had no extreme hardships of travel to encounter, since her way led through a civilized, if somewhat unsettled, country. Moreover, many of the minor kings already professed Christianity.

Brigid visited Ardagh and Munster, in the company of Erc, Bishop of Slane, convert and disciple of St Patrick, who at a great synod extolled her miraculous powers. We read of her in the now county of Limerick, in South Leinster and in Connaught. Her great monastery of Kildare was founded about the year 490.

Most of the buildings of Ireland at this time were constructed of wood, for timber was abundant ; but there were also stone churches, erected after the design of St Patrick, some of which are standing to this day. Christianity offers few relics of the past so stimulating as these little plain buildings, which still in remote places seem alive and burning with the faith that reared them. The first enclosure erected at Kildare was constructed of wattles and probably thatched. Kildare signifies *The Cell of the Oak*, for Brigid chose her site near or beneath an oak-tree. This little settlement became the nucleus of a large monastery for men and women, a large school and a large city.

It was not unusual in early Christian times for abbesses to rule over houses of men as well as of women. The abbess held the same rank as an abbot : she presided occasionally over important Church synods, as the Synod of Whitby ; within the monastery she exercised the power of a bishop and bore a crosier. It was only in mediæval times that convents of women were placed entirely under the jurisdiction of men, and the difficulties and dangers arising out of this position formed one of the most

serious problems that saints like Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila had to face. In Ireland, abbots and abbesses held a more important position than elsewhere, owing to the fact that the monastery, and not the diocese, was the centre of religious life. In Kildare we read that the authority of the abbess probably superseded that of the bishop. We quote the following interesting passage from Dr Healy's "Ireland's Ancient Schools and Scholars":—

"Kildare is the only religious establishment in Ireland which preserved down to a comparatively recent period the double line of succession of abbot-bishops and of abbesses, and what is more, the annalists take care to record the names of the abbesses as well as the abbots. This, no doubt, arose from the fact that at least in public estimation the lady-abbesses of Kildare enjoyed a kind of primacy over all the nuns in Ireland, and, moreover, were in some sense independent of Episcopal jurisdiction, if, indeed, the bishops of Kildare were not to some extent dependent upon them."

It was at this period that Ireland was known all over Europe as *Insula Sanctorum et Doctorum*, the Island of Saints and of Scholars. When all Europe was dark, mangled with war and festered with decay, Ireland kept the lamp alight, not only of spiritual faith, but of intellectual learning; and students from all parts of the Continent flocked to her schools. The three Fathers of the Irish Church, St Finnen, St Comgall and St Brendan, had each three thousand scholars under him (probably including monks), and

many of the monastery schools numbered a thousand pupils. The students were lodged, either in the monastery or in the houses outside, free of charge ; more generally, like Abelard's students seven centuries later at the Paraclete, they constructed huts for themselves near the school. Kildare's school rivalled that of Armagh, and, as we have already mentioned, it had a famous school of metal-work as well. So Brigid watched the Cell of the Oak grow into a great monastery, a great school, a great city, as nuns and monks and scholars and visitors and strangers from all parts flocked to her, drawn by the fame of the saint, and the wide-spread renown of her powers and her charity.

Various writings are attributed to Brigid, but the only one that would seem authentic is the Rule that she composed for her house, which was followed for many centuries in Ireland. Brigid is certainly to be reckoned amongst the founders of religious orders.

The mere recital of Brigid's miracles would occupy scores of pages. Mercy is the apostolic gift that she is said to have chosen, and many are the tales that tell with what tenderness she served, and with what power she cured, the sick and the diseased, lepers, lunatics and paralytics. On numberless occasions, we read, she multiplied food, either for the entertainment of her guests, or to feed the poor. We will touch upon some of these miracles later, but at this point merely relate a story which seems to reveal some of Brigid's lovable qualities, her responsive sensitiveness to the beauty of the world;

her quick apprehensions, her tender sympathy. It is told in the third and fourth Lives that :

"One evening Brigid sat with Sister Dara, a holy nun who was blind, as the sun went down ; and they talked of the love of Jesus Christ and the joys of Paradise. Now, their hearts were so full, the night fled away while they spoke together, and neither knew that so many hours had sped. Then the sun came up from the Wicklow Mountains and the pure white light made the face of earth bright and gay. Brigid sighed when she saw how lovely were earth and sky, and while she knew that Dara's eyes were closed to all this beauty. So she bowed her head and prayed. She extended her hand and signed the dark orbs of the gentle sister. Then the darkness passed away from them, and Dara saw the golden ball in the East, while all the trees and flowers glittered with dew in the morning. She looked a little while, and then turning to the Abbess said : ' Close my eyes again, dear Mother, for when the world is so visible to the eyes, God is seen less clearly in the soul.' So Brigid prayed once more, and Dara's eyes grew dark."

We seem to come into very close touch with Brigid the woman here, and it is not so very difficult to follow her in imagination as she passes in her white robes through the groves of oak, which at that time grew abundantly at Kildare, to the wide pasture-lands, where the nuns, and the abbess also, out of humility, tended the cattle. These pasture-lands

were free and open to all, and Brigid is revered for having established the right of free grazing, and is regarded as the patroness of commons.

And now we come to the aspect of Brigid under which she is most universally remembered: Brigid the Milkmaid, Brigid the Tender of Cattle.

From remotest times the occupation of Ireland has been largely pastoral; her wealth has consisted in flocks and herds. The cow was of old the standard of value, so that a king's chariot was said to be worth eighty or ninety cows. The love of the ancient Irish for the cow is seen in the fact that they embodied Ireland under the symbol of the cow, "Silk o' the Kine." Brigid's association with milking and tending cattle thus brings her into close everyday companionship with the Gaelic people. She still walks with them in the fields, blessing and protecting the herds; she is still called upon to help make the butter come. The herding blessings and herding chants have only recently been taken down from the lips of the peasants, and translated into the English tongue; we are only just beginning to realize how the toils of every day are sanctified to the Gael by invocations of rare beauty. In the Western Hebrides the flocks are still counted and dedicated to Bride on her day, and the shepherd sings to his cattle:

"The protection of God and Columba,
Encompass your coming and going,
And about you be the milkmaid of the smooth white palms,
Brigid of the clustering hair, golden-brown."

In Belgium the peasants still bring rings and other small articles to be blessed by the priest on St Bride's Day, in the belief that their sick cattle will be healed by being touched with them.

The Irish are not the only people who have regarded the Cow as symbol of an ideal. In many of the old religions the Cow and the Bull were worshipped as sacred animals, and the association of the great founders of religion with the cattle of the field is very curious and significant. Jesus Christ was born in a cowshed. So widespread an association must have its roots in some fundamental symbolism of the race, and, generally speaking, we may say that the Bull was regarded as the generative, and the Cow as the sustaining principle, of nature. Symbolically, then, Milk stood for spiritual sustenance.

This symbolism of Milk finds its completest illustration in the life of Brigid. She was, according to some accounts, baptized in milk; she was fed, so we read, on the milk of a snow-white cow; numerous legends tell how by miracle she multiplied milk; St Patrick is said to have identified her vision of rivers of milk with the milk of Christian faith. Let us dwell for a moment on these points.

As we have already indicated, certain of the Lives represent Brigid as the daughter of a slave girl, and Mr Baring Gould translates the legend of her birth in the following words:—"Brotseach, the slave girl, was shortly after returning to the house with a pitcher of fresh warm milk from the cow,

ST. BRIGID OF IRELAND
After Cahier

when she was seized with labour and sank down on the threshold, and was delivered neither in the house nor out of the house, and the pitcher of warm sweet milk, falling, was poured over the little child."

This baptism of milk becomes more significant when we remember that the mother quality is Brigid's most important attribute. Baptism by milk was actually in use in the Celtic Church at a later date, as is seen from the proceedings of the Synod of Cashel, 1172. With regard to Brigid's miraculous powers of multiplying milk for the entertainment of her guests, we read that on one occasion the cows gave so much milk that all the vessels in the place were filled, and the milk overflowed into a certain hollow, which was afterwards known by the name of the Lake of Milk. That these special miracles were meant to be interpreted spiritually rather than literally is made clear by the following story, which is told in Brigid's Life in the ancient Book of Lismore :—

"While St Patrick preached from a hill, St Brigid slept. After the sermon St Patrick asked her why she had fallen asleep. She said : ' O Father, forgive me—I have had a vision. I, your servant, have beheld four ploughs ploughing the whole of Ireland, while sowers were scattering seed. This latter immediately sprang up and began to ripen, when rivulets of fresh milk filled the furrows, while the sowers themselves were clothed in white garments. After that I saw other ploughs, and those who

ploughed appeared black. They destroyed with their ploughshares the growing corn and they sowed tares.' "

St Patrick explains this vision as follows :—We are the good sowers with the shares of the Four Gospels, while those rivers, containing the milk of Christian faith, proceed from our labours. The ploughers clad in black are the false teachers, who in aftertimes shall corrupt the True Word.

Nothing could be more explicit ; not only Brigid's vision finds here its interpretation, but also Brigid herself, Milkmaid and multiplier of Milk.

Thus Brigid's historical association with cows and with milking, her symbolic association with cows and with milking, tend to endear her to the hearts and souls of the Gaelic people. Sometimes to the Gaelic peasant and the Gaelic poet, who live close to the unseen, the symbol and the truth it stands for seem almost identical, and heavenly occupations and earthly occupations are blended into one. So it comes about that many of the present-day poets picture for us in a kind of glimmering confusion, Brigid the Milkmaid and Brigid the Star, the milk of the cow and the milk of heaven, Ireland and Paradise. Take as an illustration, Fiona Macleod's lovely " Milking Sian " :

> " Give up thy milk to her who calls
> Across the low green hills of Heaven
> And stream-cool meads of Paradise !

Across the low green hills of Heaven
How sweet to hear the milking call,
The milking call i' the meads of Heaven !

Stream-cool the meads of Paradise,
Across the low green hills of Heaven:

Give up thy milk to her who calls,
Sweet voiced amid the Starry Seven,
Give up thy milk to her who calls ! "

If Milk is thus symbolic of spiritual sustenance, it is still more symbolic of physical sustenance, and to Brigid is attributed the supreme mother quality, and, in some inexplicable way, its supreme fulfilment. Brigid is regarded not only as the mother of her people, but as the mother of God, the foster-mother of Jesus. The vision which partly led to the association of Brigid with the Virgin Mary is as follows :— A certain religious widow asked for the company of Brigid at a synod to be held on the plain of the Liffey. A holy man on his way to the synod had a vision of the Virgin Mary in his sleep. When he arrived, seeing Brigid, he exclaimed : " This is the Mary I have seen, for I know with certainty her appearance." All who were present rendered their acknowledgment to St Brigid, beholding in her a type of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and saluting her as Holy Mary. Therefore this holy virgin was thenceforth called the Mary of the Gaels and celebrated as such in many ancient Irish poems. The account of the synod is retained in an Office of St Brigid, printed in Paris, 1632.

Brigid was, however, regarded by many ancient writers as more than "a type of the Blessed Virgin Mary." Dr Todd states that Brigid is spoken of as partaking with the Virgin Mary in some mystical sense of the prerogative of being the Mother of Jesus. He adds: "The ancient authorities place her on an equality with the Blessed Virgin, giving to her also the seemingly incommunicable title of 'Dei Genetrix,' and the still more unusual one, 'Queen of the True God.'" He tells us that St Columba in a hymn, and St Brogan Cloen in a poem, write of Brigid as the Mother of our Lord.

No satisfactory key to this exceeding mystery has yet been offered. Dr Lanigan puts forward as an explanation that Brigid was called "the Second Mary, or Mary of the Irish, because she had contributed so essentially to the forming of the children of God and the brethren of Christ." But many other saints have laboured as assiduously in God's fields without being assigned this supreme crown of womanhood. It is perhaps impossible at this distance of time to recover the meaning underlying the identification of this Irish girl with the Maiden of Bethlehem. It is universally admitted that the ancient Celts believed in rebirth, at least in the case of great individuals, if not more generally, and Dr Wentz in his interesting book, "The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries," states that certain very prominent Irishmen now living in Ireland hold that both Patrick and Columba are to be regarded as ancient Gaelic heroes who have been reincarnated

to work for the uplifting of the Gael. It is for our readers to consider whether the doctrine of rebirth may not throw some light on the vexed question of Brigid as the Mary of the Gael.

This doctrine, however, does not explain the many exquisite legends that tell how, in the fifth century, Brigid passed through the magic quicken-boughs in Ireland, and found herself in Palestine ; how she was serving-girl at the inn, aid-woman to the Virgin at the Birth, and how she suckled the Holy Babe. The Brigid legends are not alone in this disregard of time, for in many of the Franciscan and other stories the Christ-Child appears ; Brother Conrad receives from the Virgin the Babe Jesus in his arms, " who, taking Him with great devotion, embracing and kissing Him and pressing Him to his breast, was melted altogether and dissolved in love divine and consolation unspeakable." Many no doubt will dismiss such legends as impossible, but there is a school of philosophers to-day who join with the mystics of all ages in denying the existence of time.

> " : : . but we that are not all,
> As parts can see but parts, now this, now that,
> And live perforce from thought to thought, and make
> The act a phantom of succession ; thus
> Our weakness somehow shapes the Shadow Time."

The reasoning of the metaphysicians on this point is difficult for the untrained mind to follow ; suffice it here to note that Professor J. A. Stewart regards " the sense of timeless being " as one of the two great

ways whereby "the consciousness comes nearest to the object of metaphysics—ultimate reality." The omniscience of God, which seems to involve a conception on our part of timelessness, led to the acceptance by many in later days of the difficult creeds of Predestination and Election, which we shall have to touch upon in the concluding chapters; but timelessness as understood by the Celts, only meant a bringing nearer to them of wonderful and lovely things. In the case of Brigid, her connexion with the Virgin has given her memory a force, a persistence, a vitality, over which time—whether it exist or not—has no power.

For centuries the Gaelic legends and folklore concerning Brigid have remained hidden from English-speaking peoples, locked up in the Gaelic tongue. But in recent years interpreters have been found, like Dr Douglas Hyde and Mr Alexander Carmichael, who have translated many of the folk-songs and made accessible to us much of the traditional lore. In the writings of Fiona Macleod many of the legends, derived orally from the people, are related in radiant language; while Lady Gregory in her versions seems to preserve with delicate fidelity the very accents of the old peasants from whose lips they were taken down. And so we know to-day that as the Gaelic herdsmen call upon Brigid the Milkmaid to bless and preserve their flocks and herds, so the Gaelic women call upon Brigid the Foster-mother of Christ to be with them at the hour of childbirth. When a woman is in labour, the aid-woman, or the woman next in

importance, goes to the door of the house and, standing on the doorstep with her hands on the jambs, softly beseeches Bride to come :

" ' Bride ! Bride ! come in,
Thy welcome is truly made,
Give thou relief to the woman,
And give the conception of the Trinity.' "

St Brigid died on 1st February 525. She was buried at Kildare. Up to the twelfth century, and perhaps later, her nuns kept a fire always burning in her memory. At the time when Kildare began to suffer from Danish incursions, Brigid's body was moved to Down, and interred secretly with the bodies of St Patrick and St Columba. The place of burial was revealed to Malachy III., Bishop of Down, in 1185, and the translation of the bodies to the cathedral at Down took place with great solemnity on 9th June 1186. The monument was destroyed in Henry VIII.'s reign and the relics dispersed : the head of St Brigid is now said to be in the Church of the Jesuits at Lisbon.

St Brigid's fire was extinguished at the demolition of the monasteries ; but it burns on in the souls of men and women to-day. The love of Bride has still power among the Gaelic people—and to repeat the genealogy of Bride is to find protection against all harms :

" The genealogy of the holy maiden Bride,
Radiant flame of gold, noble foster-mother of Christ,
Bride the daughter of Dugall the Brown,
Son of Aodh, son of Art, son of Conn,
Son of Crearar, son of Cis, son of Carmac, son of Carruin.

Every day and every night,
That I say the genealogy of Bride,
I shall not be killed, I shall not be harried,
I shall not be put in cell, I shall not be wounded,
Neither shall Christ leave me in forgetfulness.

No fire, no sun, no moon shall burn me,
No lake, no water, nor sea shall drown me,
No arrow of fairy nor dart of fay shall wound me,
And I under the protection of my Holy Mary,
And my gentle foster-mother is my beloved Bride."

Sometimes the Past, like the mists on the Brocken, increases the stature of its great figures whilst blurring the outline. Under the gleaming and titanic shape we have tried—very inadequately—to discern Brigid the woman. Symbolism alone—the symbol of Milk—is able to cover her myriad Christian aspects. She is patroness of pastoral Ireland, "Silk o' the Kine"; she is the "Mary of the Gaels," foster-nurse of Jesus, presiding over birth; she is the Milkmaid of the smooth, white hands, entering into the daily occupations of the people and touching them with a divine beauty. She is at one and the same time the Mother and the unstained Virgin, combining in her own person the two supreme qualities of womanhood, purity and maternal tenderness.

Fire

Not only the mists of antiquity bewilder us in our present brief inquiry which concerns an Ireland remoter than history ; but the mists of enchantment —those mists invoked by the Druids to blur the landscape—baffle us with a sense of conceptions hidden; strange, elusive, incomprehensible. We are groping amid root beliefs ; puzzling over survivals of tree worship, serpent worship, fire worship ; tracking out the practice of rites having their origin in Pagan times.

These root beliefs, this primitive worship, these Pagan rites have become a part of the cult of Brigid, and must be touched upon in any study of the saint.

To some extent the pagan element in Brigid ritual and legend is explained by the fact that the early Church, for political reasons, approved and even encouraged the incorporation of Pagan ceremonies in Christian worship. On days sacred to the Pagans, the Church established Christian festivals ; thus the 25th of December, sacred to the sun god, became Christmas Day. The Church tried to replace the nymphs and deities presiding over wells and groves by Christian saints and martyrs, and even to this time many of the saints' festivals on the Continent bear unmistakable traces of pre-Christian worship —survivals of the ancient worship of Ceres, and the still more ancient worship of stones. Though the Church has tried very hard in recent times to free Brigid and other saints from the pagan accretions

that have grown about their names, it has only partially succeeded.

But the very large admixture of pre-Christian thought and usage that is associated with Brigid is no doubt chiefly due to the fact that Brigid the saint was identified or confused with Brigid the goddess.

Brigid (by some considered the same goddess as Dana) was the principal goddess of Ireland. She was the daughter of Dagda, the Irish Jupiter. In Cormac's glossary, a compilation of the ninth or tenth century, it is stated that Brigid " was a goddess whom poets worshipped, for very great and very noble was her superintendence, therefore call they her goddess of poets by this name, whose sisters were Brigid, woman of smith-work, and Brigid, woman of healing—namely, goddesses, from whose names Brigid was with all Irishmen called a goddess."

This conception of the Divine Power in triads is a very striking feature of Celtic myth ; the three persons often bearing the same name as in this case, and being essentially one. The constant invocation of the Trinity in Gaelic poetry, the devotion to the Trinity in Gaelic worship, may partly spring from this primitive root-belief of the race. We see that this trinity of Brigids presided over the chief arts and crafts practised in ancient Ireland—poetry, smith-work and healing—and the Christian Brigid is the patron saint of art and of beauty, as well as of fire.

The goddess Brigid was a goddess of fire. And fire is extraordinarily prominent in Brigid legend

and Brigid ritual. Owing to the fact that St Patrick in revising the Brehon Laws expunged all references to the Druids and Druidic observances, the information obtainable on the subject of the ancient Irish religion is fragmentary. Sun and fire were, however, undoubtedly objects of worship. We read in a very early Christian tract preserved in the Book of Leinster of the great gold-covered idol, the king-idol of Ireland, called the Cromm Cruach. It stood on Moyslaught, the Plain of Adoration (supposed to be in the county Cavan), surrounded by twelve lesser idols ornamented with bronze—clearly, scholars hold, a symbol of the sun god ruling over the twelve months. In the Tripartite Life, we read how St Patrick overthrew these thirteen idols; on many other occasions he emphatically condemned sun worship. The Irish also worshipped with fire ceremonies the god Bel, identified by some with Baal, god of the Phœnicians. The ancient Irish had extensive commerce with these people, and it is very probable that the worship of Bel was introduced by them. Again, from the Hill of Tara, sacred fires at Eastertide announced the annual resurrection of the sun; and Druids swore by the sun and the wind. Dr Wentz regards the "strange cyclopean circular structure" Dun Angus on Aran-Môr, and other circular structures in the west of Ireland, as sun temples. The story of the great Irish hero Cuchulain contains a strong element of the solar myth, and the stones and bronzes from sepulchral mounds that have come down to us from pre-

Christian times bear unmistakable traces of the symbols of sun and fire worship. From these and many similar allusions and deductions it may be concluded that the worship of sun and fire was a prominent feature of the ancient Irish religion.

And now to indicate the connexion between Brigid the saint, and Brigid, goddess of fire. St Brigid is invoked as "Fiery Dart," "Fiery Arrow"—this, however, is the signification of the name. Her monastery was called the House of Fire. It is reported to have been built on the site of a temple resembling Stonehenge (regarded by Sir John Rhŷs as a sun temple to the Celtic god Angus). The seed of St Brigid's great foundation sprang from under an oak, a tree which most authorities hold to have been sacred to the Irish as well as to the Gaulish Druids. The great Irish scholar, Whitley Stokes, declares that one may without much rashness pick out certain of the incidents of the life of St Brigid as having "originally belonged to the myth or the ritual of some goddess of fire."

The bishop who hesitated to consecrate Brigid saw a column of fire shining above her head while she prayed in the church, and so was convinced of the holiness of the maiden. The Magus (so the Latin Lives translate the word Druid), studying the stars, saw fire ascending from the house in which Brigid and her mother slept. When Brigid's mother was out milking the cows, the house appeared to be in flames, but remained unconsumed, and the child was found slumbering within unharmed.

A cloth took fire suddenly, and touched the head of the holy child, doing no injury and remaining unburned. These and similar legends are to be found in the six Lives ; and to this day the name of Brigid is invoked when the peasants are " smooring the fire "—*i.e.* covering up a red sod or turf with ashes at night so that it may be alive in the morning for relighting :

" I save this fire as Christ saved every one ; Brigid beneath it, the Son of Mary within it ; let the three angels having most power in the court of Grace be keeping this house and the people of this house and sheltering them until the dawn of day."

There is a spell, too, put upon flame in the beautiful legend that gives to the saint the name of Bride of Brightness, St Brigid of the Candles. It is told how, when the Virgin went up to the Temple for purification, Brigid walked before her with a lighted candle in each hand. The wind blew strong on the Temple heights, and yet the flames never wavered. And so Candlemas Day is sometimes called the Feast Day of Bride of the Candles. The Pagans were wont in February to carry candles in the Lupercalia, and Pope Gelasius substituted the Christian Candlemas for the Pagan festival.

Not only legend, but history, connects Brigid with fire. The well-known Giraldus Cambrensis visited Kildare city in 1185. Foremost among many miraculous things worthy of record he writes of

St Brigid's inextinguishable fire. It had been fed by nuns from St Brigid's time to the twelfth century, when he wrote, and had been kept perpetually burning. Twenty nuns watched it in rotation for twenty nights. On the twenty-first night, having placed wood on its embers, the last nun said: "O Brigid, guard thy fire, for this night the duty devolves on thyself." It would be hard to find in all history a picture more full of wonder and romance. A circular hedge of shrubs or thorns surrounded the fire, and no male person was allowed to enter within that sacred enclosure. Dimly we strive to conceive the thoughts of each nun as she watched by that everlasting fire, its perpetual life leaping upward until strange shadows sprang about the green walls. Not Brigid the Milkmaid was her companion in these long vigils, but Brigid the "Fiery Dart," daughter of the Irish Jupiter. Such fires were kept burning in Pagan times in the temples of Jupiter, as well as in the temples of the Vestal Virgins. But the temple where the Irish fire flamed for hundreds of years was the vast temple of the night. Not till the thirteenth century was St Brigid's fire regarded as a relic of past superstition; and then it was a Norman who failed to realize its symbolic beauty. In the year 1220, Henry of London, Archbishop of Dublin, ordered St Brigid's fire at Kildare to be extinguished. It was, however, relighted by order of the Bishop of Kildare, and continued to burn till the dissolution of the monasteries. Perpetual fires were also kept burning in other monasteries in Ireland.

Fire may thus fittingly be regarded as one of Brigid's symbols, and an emblem of hers is rightly a perpetual flame. And though many of these legends and customs must derive from Pagan times, together with the fire festivals which are celebrated to this day in Ireland on 1st May and 24th June, yet there is no symbol more spiritual, more appropriate to a Christian saint than fire, the great purifier, " which exists independently of the material forms in which it abides." The perpetual flame is the image of immortality, the column of fire, of the divine outpouring of heaven upon earth.

The ritual which prevails on St Bride's Eve among the Gaelic peasantry is a most curious blending of Christian and Pagan ideas. Mr Alexander Carmichael, in his invaluable " Carmina Gadelica," has given an interesting account of these Bride ceremonies, of which we venture to make a brief summary. The young girls have a special part to play, and a special part is assigned to the mothers. The young girls fashion an ikon of Bride, in the Islands out of a corn sheaf, in Ireland out of a churn staff. They decorate the image with shells and early flowers ; but the significant ornament is the bright stone or the cross that is put on the breast of the ikon. In the Islands they use a crystal, in Ireland, a cross in the shape of the svastika, delicately woven of straw and rushes. The girls, clad in white, with their hair down, carry the image from house to house, singing the song of beauteous Bride, the virgin of a thousand charms. They

receive gifts ; afterwards they barricade themselves in a house to which the young men are only admitted after much traditional parleying. The night is passed in merriment, and in the morning the remains of the feast—practically the whole feast, for it has been partaken of but sparingly—are distributed to the poor. The ritual of the mothers is still more curious. They fashion an oblong basket in the shape of a cradle, which they call the Bed of Bride. They also make an image, gaily decorated. " When all is prepared," says Mr Alexander Carmichael, " one woman goes to the door of the house and, standing on the step with her hands on the jambs, calls softly into the darkness : ' Bride's bed is ready.' To this a ready woman behind replies : ' Let Bride come in, Bride is welcome.' The woman at the door again addresses Bride : ' Bride, Bride, come thou in, thy bed is made. Preserve the house for the Trinity.' The women then place the ikon of Bride with great ceremony in the bed they have so carefully prepared for it."

Various forms of divination are then attempted—the ashes of the hearth being smoothed and dusted over carefully. In the early morning the ashes are scanned for the mark of the wand of Bride or the footprint of Bride, and there is great joy if the mark is found, for it signifies increase in family and in flock and in field. But should there be no trace of Bride's presence, incense is burned and oblations offered. The oblation is generally a cockerel buried alive near the junction of three streams, and the

incense is burned on the hearth when the family retires for the night.

To enter into an explanation of these ceremonies is the work of the student. The making of the image, the forms of divination, the living sacrifice—these are clearly Pagan survivals having their roots in remotest antiquity. But the cross is Christian, symbol of the Star of Bethlehem, symbol of the Birth of the Ideal, symbol, as we have already said, of the First Initiation. Perhaps the most interesting part of this strange ritual is the very clear differentiation in the ceremonies assigned to the maidens and the mothers. This marks more plainly than anything else the wide recognition of Bride's twofold aspect of Virginity and Motherhood.

One purely Pagan rite in connexion with Bride survived until within recent times. A propitiatory hymn used to be sung to the serpent on Bride's Day, when it was supposed to emerge from its hollow in the hills. Only one verse of the hymn survives, which varies in varying localities :

> " On the day of Bride of the white hills,
> The noble queen (serpent) will come from the knoll,
> I will not molest the noble queen,
> Nor will the noble queen molest me."

A great stream of root beliefs and root traditions has thus come down to us on the tide of St Brigid's popularity. In the foregoing chapter we have endeavoured to indicate some reasons for the strong spiritual appeal that Brigid makes to the Irish

people ; it is seen now that she also embodies some of the most ancient ideals of the race, and is linked with remotest ancestral memory. For no other woman who has ever lived, except the Virgin Mary herself, has so much been claimed by those who have loved her. No other woman, except the Virgin Mary herself, has been endowed to the same extent with the qualities symbolized by Milk and Fire, the Mother quality of love, and the Virgin quality of purity.

And it is not altogether strange that some of the mystics of to-day, brooding upon this woman and upon womanhood, should connect Brigid in their hearts with the thought of a new birth, and dream of a regeneration that may come, perhaps, through her who made the lowliest toil into a divine message.

" I believe that we are close upon a great and deep spiritual change," writes Fiona Macleod, " I believe a new redemption is even now conceived of the Divine Spirit in the human heart, that is itself as a woman, broken in dreams and yet sustained in faith, patient, long-suffering, looking towards home. I believe that though the reign of peace may be yet a long way off . . . it is drawing near ; and that who shall save us anew shall come divinely as a woman, to save as Christ saved, but not, as He did, to bring with her a sword. But whether this divine woman, this Mary of so many passionate hopes and dreams, is to come through mortal birth, or as an immortal breathing upon our souls, none can yet know. . . . And since then I have learned,

and do see, that not only prophecies and hopes, and desires unclothed yet in word or thought, foretell her coming, but already a multitude of spirits are in the gardens of the soul, and are sowing seed, and calling upon the wind of the south ; and that everywhere are watching eyes and uplifted hands, and signs which cannot be mistaken, in many lands, in many peoples, in many minds ; and in the heaven itself that the soul sees, the surpassing signature."

HÉLOÏSE

The Intellectual Background

FOR our background in this drama we have neither the fierce gold of the desert nor the lush green of Irish meadows ; neither the terrible silence of the one, nor the cool peace of the other. Mediæval Paris in all the motley exuberance of the twelfth century rises to form our *mise en scène.*

Asceticism, penance, forgiveness won after cruel suffering : such was the aspect of Christianity that occupied our first chapters. The giving of spiritual blessings and the illumination of common labour by association with the saints of God : such was the aspect of Christianity that occupied our next chapters. The aspect of Christianity that we have to deal with now is its intellectual aspect ; theology, and not mysticism, is our objective ; reason, and not unquestioning faith, is to be our guide. We are in the clash of controversy, of logic, of dialectic, of rhetoric ; we have entered upon that age when even the common man felt a more poignant interest in the solution of a metaphysical problem than in the rumours of wars or the deaths of kings, when the enthusiasm for disputations drew students by their thousands from all parts of the civilized world to centres of learning, and when the reputation of

teachers was made and lost solely by their skill in the subtleties of argument.

The story of Abelard and Héloïse is closely connected with the intellectual renascence of the twelfth century. Their story has a significance beyond its romance and its tragedy. The importance of both of the lovers in the history of the human mind is no less assured than their importance in the history of human emotion. Venerated throughout the ages for the greatness of their love, they deserve to be equally venerated for the greatness of their intelligence ; acclaimed by all poets as exponents of pure passion, they must be equally acclaimed by all students as exponents of pure reason. Abelard is accounted not only the greatest intellect of the Middle Ages, but, by some, one of the greatest intellects of all time : Héloïse is eminent among the learned women of the past, and stands out not only by her daring in speculation, but by her sound common-sense. To appreciate rightly the coil in which these two noble souls were involved, we must touch briefly on the condition of human thought in the times when they lived.

An additional interest is imported to this inquiry by the fact that both Abelard and Héloïse are peculiarly modern in view. The setting of their story is mediæval ; the ideas that animate it might belong to to-day. We find a mediæval abbess seriously questioning whether a great human love should not have precedence over love for God, and pleading that nuns should not be subjected to

severer abstinences than devout lay people. We find a mediæval abbot claiming that the heathen philosophers had received a certain measure of divine revelation, undermining the authority of the Church Fathers, and introducing dialectic into theology. Not only is the story of Abelard and Héloïse within reach of our comprehension and sympathy on the emotional side, it is within reach of our comprehension and sympathy on the intellectual side also. We do not tread in this chapter among visions and miracles and wonders, but on the solid, ordinary ground of every day.

The twelfth century was a period of extraordinary intellectual activity. Its renascence was as real, if never as widely recognized, as the renascence of the sixteenth century. It is true that the Greeks, fleeing from Constantinople after its fall in 1453, established a more complete and widespread knowledge of the classical writers than was within the reach of the twelfth century; but in the twelfth century, chiefly through Arab sources, Plato and Aristotle began to be more thoroughly known, and the early Crusades furnished that stimulus of new experience which the adventurers of Tudor times found in the exploration of unknown lands and seas.

The renascence of the sixteenth century was an awakening to the beauty of the outer world, and a quickening of the life of the inner world. But these two apprehensions proceeded on divergent lines and proved antagonistic. An intense worship of beauty and joy ran counter to an iconoclastic

Puritan spirit that held beauty and joy as children of the devil. The twelfth century renascence included two equally opposed elements—the adoration of pure reason, and an effort after spiritual purification that manifested itself in a striking revival of the monastic ideal. Abelard exhibited in his own character a like contradiction of parts. One of the greatest exponents of pure reason the world has ever known, he is remembered rather as the lover of Héloïse than as a philosopher anticipating Descartes, as a theologian anticipating Luther.

Twelfth-century thought is marked by certain unique characteristics. In no other century did the mere Grammatical Abstract awaken such fervour of enthusiasm. No other century has displayed so keen a delight in studies that had no apparent bearing on practical life. No other century has explored with such whole-hearted rapture the bypaths of logic and dialectics. We are apt to think that these disputations were a mere chopping of logic, subtleties of word-spinning, tortuosities of language, arid and dry and profitless beyond measure. We cannot understand how arguments about Universals (which may be roughly interpreted as Abstract Terms or Ideas) should have turned Europe into a vast schoolhouse and filled its roads with travelling scholars ready to face the severest hardships for the sake of acquiring the knowledge of grammar, logic and dialectics. We watch with bewilderment the fierce partisanship that alike

marked the adherents of the Realist philosophy, which held that Universals were realities, and the adherents of the Nominalist philosophy, which held that Universals were only names. And yet it is impossible to believe that a movement marked by so much energy, vigour and brilliance had not its roots deep down in vital human needs and activities.

And, as a matter of fact, the terms Nominalist and Realist roughly cover two schools of thought which have existed and been in conflict since man began to think at all—two schools of thought which touch man's life at almost every point. Reason and Faith, Religion and Science, Induction and Deduction, Synthesis and Analysis, Plato and Aristotle, those who uphold belief in the Unseen and those who rely upon the evidence of the senses—between these contending factions warfare has been, and is, unceasing. The Nominalists, roughly speaking, belonged to the Deductive School : they were on the side of Reason, Science, Aristotle ; they tested truth by the evidence of the senses. The Realists belonged to the Inductive School, the Synthetic School ; Plato was their master ; Ideas were the supreme reality. Of course each army has known innumerable subdivisions, and desertions from one camp to the other have been frequent and disconcerting. To-day the manœuvres are so intricate that it is almost impossible to follow them. But in times of less mental complexity the skirmishes are more clearly visible, the issues are simpler, and the results (to the combatants at least) more decisive.

The leaders of either party stand out with more flashing impressiveness; sometimes, indeed, they are champions who contend in single combat before the eyes of the world. The twelfth century presents the thrilling spectacle of two such famous champions matched one against the other, and shows us an amazing and unaccountable surrender which it taxes all the resources of psychology to explain.

Abelard stood forth as the champion of Pure Reason; St Bernard of Clairvaux stood forth the champion of Unquestioning Faith. At the Council of Sens in the year 1141, before a great conclave of nobles and ecclesiastics, including the French King, Louis VII., the two great opponents were set to wrestle for supremacy in a battle of tongues.

But before we come to this memorable event, let us glance briefly at Abelard's intellectual position. We need not enter here into Abelard's controversies with both Nominalists and Realists, nor tell of his duels with, and victories over, the chief exponents of both schools. His position was, that Universals have actual existence, but in the mind only, and possess no reality outside. In modern times this school of thought is known as Conceptualism, but in the Middle Ages it was always looked upon as a form of Nominalism, and was indeed a return to the Aristotelian philosophy. These dialectical triumphs, however, concern themselves with a somewhat local form of a universal question; and we would rather indicate Abelard's originality and daring of thought along broader lines.

The scientific attitude of his mind is shown in his dictum: *By doubting we are led to inquire; by inquiry we perceive the truth.* The supreme place given to reason in his philosophy is indicated by this sentence extracted from a book of his on the Trinity: *Doctrine is not to be believed because God has said it, but because we are convinced by reason that it is so.* In this book he applies dialectics to theology, and immediately comes into conflict with orthodox opinion. Abelard was accused of Tri-theism, an accusation constantly levelled against the Nominalists, who, as they only attributed existence to individuals, annulled that of the Three Persons, or realized them as three individual essences, which was to admit three gods. In 1121 Abelard was condemned to burn publicly his book on the Trinity and to recite aloud the Athanasian Creed. This sentence was, however, imposed upon him, not for heresy, but because the book had been issued without authorization.

Abelard's attack upon authority is best seen in that amazing work of his, "Sic et Non." This work, which we still possess, is arranged in three parallel columns. In the first column are 158 questions on points of dogma; in the other two columns are answers extracted from the works of the Church Fathers, *mutually contradictory*: in the one column an affirmative, in the other a negative answer being given! No more effective method could have been devised for subverting the undue influence of tradition, but he was a bold man who dared the task, for

the writings of the Fathers were regarded by many as little less sacred than the Scriptures themselves. Abelard acknowledged the supreme authority of the Bible, but he regarded human reason as sufficient for its interpretation. While he deprecated unquestioning reverence being paid to writings not in the Scripture, he admitted a divine inspiration in all noble thought, Christian or pre-Christian. Again, his views of heaven and hell did not conform with the mediæval teaching of the Church. Heaven, he held to be an approach to God, who is the supreme Good; and hell to be isolation from Him. When we consider the time in which Abelard lived and wrote, we are amazed at the intellect that could forge so far ahead of accepted opinion.

It is obvious at once that his arguments were bound sooner or later to come into conflict with the doctrines of the mediæval Church. For Abelard did more than perfect a philosophy ; he did more than apply dialectics to theology and found Scholasticism ; his importance rests not only on his greatness as a thinker, but on his greatness as a teacher. He had all the gifts of the orator : fascination of personality, charm and richness of voice, brilliance and colour of language. Whatever subject he touched became alive ; and he made the most difficult and abstruse themes lucid and convincing. Students flocked to his lectures with an enthusiasm almost unparalleled in history : he awoke in them a burning passion for inquiry, a fierce thirst for knowledge, so that great crowds of his disciples followed him even

into the wilderness, and built mud-huts, and endured every kind of hardship gladly, that they might enjoy the teaching of their beloved master.

Although Abelard lived before the time of universities we may with justice attribute the university movement indirectly to him. The vast bodies of students he attracted to Paris—five thousand, some say—necessitated the multiplication and organization of masters ; the great cathedral school in which he taught, developed finally into the most famous of mediæval universities, the University of Paris. It seems indeed almost impossible to reckon up the debt that learning owes to Abelard's genius.

Abelard held himself always a true son of the Church, and never appears to have doubted any of its dogmas ; but his attitude of mind, his method of approaching religious problems, the tone and spirit of his teaching, were aggressively at variance with the whole body of ecclesiastical tradition and usage. Further, he offended, with debonair recklessness, susceptibilities which had grown to be almost religious—as when he tried to convince his fellow-monks of St Denis on the authority of the Venerable Bede that Dionysius the Areopagite (Denis) could not possibly have suffered martyrdom in Paris, as they fondly believed, nor have been the founder of their house. He made enemies apart from his views by his gay and arrogant self-confidence ; and it is with little surprise that we find him arraigned by St Bernard of Clairvaux, not only for being a heretic, but for preaching all the great historical heresies that

had torn the Church from earliest times. At the Synod of 1141 Abelard was accused of denying the Trinity with Arius, of destroying the Incarnation with Nestorius, of taking away the necessity of Grace with Pelagius; of having boasted that he was ignorant of nothing; of being never willing to say of anything, *Nescio*, I do not know it; of pretending to expound inexplicable things, to comprehend incomprehensible mysteries, and to give reasons for what is above reason.

St Bernard, the author of the accusation, and Abelard, are the two most remarkable figures of the twelfth century. Bernard stands for authority, for orthodox Christianity, but for Christianity reformed, purged, purified by the fire. Preacher of the Second Crusade, adviser of popes and kings, he threw himself with fierce energy into the monastic revival, sought unceasingly to recruit the soldiers of the Church, and waged constant warfare against those whom he considered its enemies. No greater contrast to Abelard can be imagined than this ascetic, this mystic, this seer of visions. Bernard is an example of that type of character which, drawing its strength from the spiritual exercise of meditation and prayer and penance, becomes a powerful force in the world of men and affairs. That Bernard was a man of untiring zeal and high purpose no one will deny; but even his most ardent defenders admit that he had the defects of his qualities—that he showed himself on occasion narrow and limited. Indeed, Dr Hastings Rashdall, in his admirable "Universities

of Europe," goes so far as to assert that Abelard was as much done to death by Bernard as if he had died at the stake. Yet Bernard, at whose voice Europe trembled—Bernard, whose sweet-tongued eloquence had given him the title of the "Mellifluous Doctor" —shrank as long as he could from the personal encounter which Abelard sought. He knew himself no match for Abelard's burning oratory, for his swift and flashing intellect. "I am a child to him," he is reported to have said. And so when at last he was forced to enter the lists for single combat, he invoked against Abelard's pure reason all the powers of emotion, of beauty, of association, of appeal to the hidden and unseen. He called the whole gorgeous ritual of the Church to his aid, and on the day before the conclave he performed at the cathedral of Sens the magnificent ceremony of blessing the relics. This was perhaps legitimate warfare ; but there are some who accuse Bernard of resorting to expedients not so legitimate—of packing the cathedral, for instance, with adherents of his own.

Behold, then, the two champions in battle array, France and intellectual Europe looking on. "Faith precedes Reason" is the device of the one side. "Reason precedes Faith" is the device of the other.

The moment had come for Abelard to speak. The whole vast assembly was on the tiptoe of expectation. To the amazement of everybody, Abelard exclaimed : "I refuse to be judged like a criminal ! I appeal to Rome ! " and without another word he turned on his heel and left the conclave.

It is impossible to account for this action. He may have felt himself condemned before he had spoken. Or his courage, tried by many adversities and failures, may have deserted him. He may have experienced one of those sudden alterations of mood to which, throughout his career, he was liable. His ardent Celtic temperament—he was a Breton—was apt to plunge him from the height of self-confidence into the abyss of despair. At critical moments he, champion of Reason, yielded to sudden impulses, which were his undoing. It is a tragical ending of this historic combat—this ignominious defeat and flight of one of the combatants. For Bernard had the ear of the Pope, and Innocent II. imposed perpetual silence on Abelard as a heretic, and ordered him to be imprisoned. The sentence was afterwards rescinded, but Abelard never recovered from the blow.

So, in the story of Abelard's career, we see his titanic mind, first in its triumphant struggle, and then in its vain struggle against the spirit of his time. So in his love story we see his titanic personality in tragic and in vain struggle against circumstances of his own making. Supremely great as a thinker, supremely devoted as a lover, fatality seems to dog his every action. The sufferings of Héloïse will claim our chief attention in the following pages, but we may here ask one moment's sympathy for the sufferings of Abelard. The pain borne by Héloïse was caused in the main by her great and enduring love, by the anguish of separation ; but it was pain

on the heroic scale that almost touched joy. Abelard had to bear ignominious torment, the shame of Fulbert's base revenge, the petty persecution of the ignorant and the intolerant, the treachery and brutality of his own monks who sought his life, and finally, in his closing days, miserable defeat and excommunication. Yet through all the long years of trouble and turmoil, his intellect burned strong and clear, and Abelard's work stands to-day a high landmark in the history of the mind of man.

The Love Story

All the stories that have captured the imagination of men are preserved through the centuries by some salt of greatness. More especially, perhaps, is this salt of greatness needed to keep strong and pure in the memory of the world the love tragedies of history. Sublimity of soul is the mark of the great lovers whose love has dominated time : their love is transfigured by sacrifice and suffering ; hell itself cannot stand against its heroism. Ishtar dares the appalling dangers of the Babylonian underworld, in search of her beloved ; Orpheus rescues Eurydice from the Kingdom of the Shades. Even when lovers are of a less transcendent courage, their passion, or, it may be, their punishment, is on a noble scale. The magic philtre sets Tristran and Iseult in splendid isolation, and, drifting in the vast circles of Hades, Paolo and Francesca expiate endlessly their brief moment of bliss.

In the old religions, in ancient epic and romance, in the imagination of poets, the love of man and woman has been conceived in its perfect radiance. Great love stories that have their root in history are naturally more rare. For myth casts its subject in titanic proportions, and romance invests its theme with gorgeous trappings of colour and light, and poetry purges its material of all dross, whereas sober fact rejects towering height and extraneous glamour. Documentary evidence shows men and women in their everyday moods and in their moments of weakness, and therefore historical love stories must possess strong and persistent elements if they are to enter into the treasured memories of the race, and take their place beside the great dreams and ideals of all time.

Such elements persist in the story of Abelard and Héloïse, and the passage of centuries has scarcely dimmed its emotion. It pulses with a living humanity, derived as it is from contemporary annals and from the letters of the lovers themselves. Yet so ingenious are the devices, so apt the catastrophe; that we seem sometimes to be dealing rather with a carefully planned structure of the imagination than with the rude facts of life ; we appear to be treading the paths of romantic tragedy rather than following an actual record of experience. Indeed, the authenticity of the letters of the lovers has been tentatively questioned, and it is true that the oldest manuscript is dated one hundred years after the death of Héloïse ; but all competent authorities are agreed

that the letters (with a few possible interpolations) were actually written by Abelard and Héloïse, and it is supposed that the preliminary letter, equally genuine, which gave rise to the correspondence, was intended primarily for public circulation.

Many factors contribute to the abiding lure of this story. Simply as a story, it abounds in dramatic surprise, in plot and counterplot. It includes the idyll and the tragedy. It plumbs the deeps of emotion, and the vexed problems of philosophy have their place in it. But numerous love stories exhibit some at least of these features. What lifts the story of Abelard and Héloïse above other stories is the extraordinary interest of the characters of the two lovers.

Abelard was best loved in his lifetime—loved, some French critics are inclined to think, as few men have ever been loved before. But Héloïse has perhaps been best loved since she was dead : loved by generations of men who have found in her passion strong as a flame, in her self-abandonment which yet never loses its dignity, in her selflessness which involves no blind surrender, the woman of their soul's ideal. It is unnecessary to remind the reader how the cult of Héloïse has flourished from that time to this. The Letters were well known in the Middle Ages, one of the authors of the "Romaunt of the Rose" having made a translation of them from the original Latin into French ; and we all remember how Pope slightly distorted the perspective of the story to bring it within the horizon of his century. Héloïse

makes appeal to-day chiefly by her courage, which disdained repentance and scorned remorse—and by that quality in her love which lifted it high above the senses. But if to-day we are able to render Héloïse her full meed, we are better constituted to follow with understanding and with sympathy the intricate problems and dire tragedies that beset Abelard. Without a due realization of Abelard's genius, the story loses half its poignancy and meaning.

We take it up in the year 1118, when Abelard was thirty-nine years old, and at the very height of his fame and powers. We are in the heart of mediæval Paris.

Imagine for a moment the teeming life under the shadow of old Notre Dame, in the dim grey of the cloisters and the parti-coloured streets! At five or six o'clock each morning, in fresh summer or cold winter dawn, the great cathedral bell rang out the summons to work; and from all the tortuous lanes, the students, including men from England, Germany, Poland, Italy, Spain, passed in their hundreds, in their thousands, to the great lecture hall. There they sat themselves on the floor strewn with hay or straw and for six or seven hours listened to the teachers, and made notes of the lectures upon waxed tablets. Then the streets, crowded already with canons, monks, priests, clerks of every degree, with nobles and citizens and craftsmen, each in distinctive dress, grew more dense as the horde of students poured into them. One striking figure drew all eyes—a man, handsome, still in the prime of life,

with fine brow and noble look, grave and yet careful in his dress, a magnetic personality that would have attracted attention even had his name and fame been unknown. But his name and fame were bruited even to the remote corners of the civilized world, for this was the great Abelard, the principal of the cathedral school, the best-beloved master in Paris; the most illustrious master in Europe. By his own unaided efforts he had conquered this splendid position; by arduous labour, unmatched eloquence and unrivalled learning he had won his way from triumph to triumph. He stood now on the apex of his renown—of great wealth, for his instruction was not given gratuitously—adored by his disciples, honoured and feared by the doctors of all Christendom. The eldest son of a noble of Brittany, he had relinquished his patrimony that he might pursue knowledge, and, as was the custom of those days, he had wandered from school to school in search of instruction. Dialectics were ever his favourite study. "I went," he tells us, "wherever I heard that this art was held in honour." He had to fight for his success step by step against strenuous opposition, but he was sustained and inspired by the consciousness within himself of unique powers. And now, as he passed along the streets of Paris, all the people turned to look after him; women drew aside the curtains of their narrow windows to see him go by. "Was there a king, a philosopher whose fame could equal yours?" wrote Héloïse of this time. "What country, what city, what village was not stirred by

the desire to see you? If you walked abroad, who did not hasten forth to catch a glimpse of you?"

They still point to a house in the environs of Notre Dame that tradition assigns to the Canon Fulbert. It is the first house to the left entering the Rue des Chantres: the walls have been entirely rebuilt, but it is possible that the interior is old. Here, if we accept this tradition, dwelt Héloïse with her uncle, the Canon. She was at this time seventeen or eighteen years old, and already famous for her attainments. Abelard, writing from his monastery twelve years after the events, describes her beauty in cautious terms, but gives her knowledge heartwhole praise. "In appearance she was not amongst the least attractive," he says, "in learning she was amongst the most distinguished." Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, wrote to her in later years: "In truth my affection for you is not of recent growth, but of long standing. I had hardly passed the bounds of youth when the repute, if not yet of your religious fervour, at least of your becoming and praiseworthy studies, reached my ears. I remembered hearing at that time of a woman who, though still involved in the toils of the world, devoted herself to letters and the pursuit of wisdom, which is a rare occurrence." He goes on: "In study you not only outstripped all women, but there were few men whom you did not surpass." It is probable that Héloïse knew Greek and Hebrew, and, of course, Latin before she met Abelard; he taught her, in addition, dialectics, theology and ethics.

Learning in women was not unusual in the twelfth century. A little before the time of Héloïse there had been a school for women in Paris, conducted by the wife and daughters of the famous master, Manegold of Alsace—women, we read, who were well versed in Scripture, and most distinguished in philosophy. The names of many famous women scholars of that period have come down to us—of abbesses who wrote Latin poems, who cultivated grammar and philosophy, who compiled encyclopædias of the knowledge of the age. Not only did high dignitaries of the Church commend learning in women, but it was even an attraction in the eyes of the lover. The love that Héloïse had for study, Abelard tells us, created another sweet bond between them. "The pen is bolder than the lips," he writes.

The letters of Abelard and Héloïse contain not only the fullest account of their love story, but are our surest key to the character of the lovers themselves. They hold a unique position among the great love letters of the world; for they were written twelve years after the abbey gates had shut each of them away from human love—written with the sure knowledge that human love was denied them for ever. Abelard and Héloïse had met in the interval, husband and wife, grave nun and severe abbot; but no flash of feeling, no sudden emotion had broken the sober decorum of their attitude, and but for the happy accident of the correspondence, their souls would have remained impenetrably sealed to each other, and to us.

The correspondence began in somewhat remarkable fashion. Abelard, Abbot of St Gildas in Brittany, addressed to a friend a letter entitled "History of my Calamities." This letter, which is a kind of *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, was intended, it is believed, for public circulation. It fell into the hands of Héloïse, and impelled her to those replies which have moved the hearts of generations of men and women. Abelard; in the "History of my Calamities," looks back upon the incidents of his love through long years of unprecedented trial and suffering. His after-experiences have coloured the narrative, he writes when the flame of passion has died out. His ecclesiastical surroundings invest certain of his past failings with a perhaps exaggerated importance; he speaks of the fever of pride and luxury that devoured him—sins peculiarly obnoxious to the monastic mind. He is also careful to tell us that the baser pleasures of the senses had no attraction for him, and that his arduous labours in the preparation of his lectures left him no time to cultivate the society of noble ladies, nor indeed had he many acquaintances, even among the bourgeoisie. But he seems entirely unaware of the crime with which modern criticism reproaches him —the burial of Héloïse, young, ardent, joyous, wholly unsuited to the religious life, in the gloom of a cloister.

This first letter of Abelard's is in truth a human document, revealing alike the strength and the weakness of the writer. We have here no hero of romance, but a very man, miserable, tormented, unhappy, persecuted and pursued.

There lived in Paris—so Abelard's narrative begins—a young girl named Héloïse, niece of a canon called Fulbert, who in his tender love for her had neglected nothing that would advance her education. The very rarity of learning in women, Abelard goes on, gave an additional charm to this young girl, whose reputation was already spread throughout the whole kingdom. Abelard tells us that from the first he felt certain of winning the love of Héloïse. He was not unaware of the magic and charm of his own personality, which had drawn five thousand devoted disciples to Paris; he knew that his fame was great enough to dazzle the eyes of any woman. So, in pursuit of his object, Abelard proposed to take rooms in Fulbert's house, on pretext of its nearness to the school. Fulbert agreed with joy. Not only was he tempted by his love of money, but his pride saw here an unlooked-for opportunity of forwarding his niece's intellectual progress. Fulbert begged Abelard to devote every moment of his leisure to the education of Héloïse, night as well as day; and, if he found her in fault, not to hesitate to punish her, even by blows. No suspicion crossed the Canon's mind. His niece he considered no more than a child, and Abelard was a great philosopher of unblemished reputation. And so, under the pretext of study, says Abelard, "we gave ourselves up wholly to love; the device of lessons procured for us that mysterious intercourse which love demands. The books were open, but there were more words of love than of philosophy, more kisses than explanations; we looked

more often into each other's eyes than upon the text. In our ardour we passed through all the phases of love ; we exhausted every refinement of passion."

Abelard's love for Héloïse at this moment dominated his whole existence. The pursuit of knowledge and ambition, which had been the driving forces of his life, were inoperative ; books, lectures, pupils, were neglected. His discourses were delivered with indifference, and for his subject-matter he drew upon memory. A whole new side of his nature developed. The thinker became the artist, the poet, the musician, the creator of beautiful things. Where his philosophy failed to penetrate, his love songs entered, and " Abelard " and " Héloïse " were on the lips of every villager. " Every street, every house," says Héloïse, " resounded with my name." These verses of tender grace, this music of sweetest melody, have gone on the wind. Nevertheless, Abelard may be claimed as the first French poet to use the vernacular for his verse.

Months passed : Abelard's pupils watched with consternation the change that had come over their master. All the world had guessed the secret before any suspicion crossed Fulbert's mind. But at last he, too, was undeceived, and Abelard left the house, overcome with remorse, agonized by the separation, heartbroken for the fate of Héloïse. The parting of the lovers, however, only increased their passion, and after a little while Héloïse wrote in a transport of joy to tell Abelard she was about to become a

mother. So one night, when Fulbert was away, Abelard took Héloïse, disguised as a nun, to his sister in Brittany, where she bore a son, whom she called Astrolabe.

Her flight made Fulbert furious with rage and grief, and Abelard, touched by the violence of the Canon's sorrow, and wishing also to atone for his treachery, promised to marry Héloïse on condition that the marriage should be kept a secret. Abelard was probably a canon of Notre Dame, but marriage was at this time not thought unbecoming in the lower clergy. Indeed, the Church Councils of 1102, 1107 and 1119 did not forbid the marriage of priests, nor even of bishops. Nevertheless, marriage would unfailingly prove a barrier to high ecclesiastical preferment, and, from this point of view, might ruin Abelard's career. This at least was the opinion held by Héloïse. She opposed the plan of marriage with all the force of her nature, with a tenacity and a courage amazing in one of her years. "How the Church would frown on such a marriage!" Abelard reports her to have said. "What tears it would cost philosophy! How deplorable it would be to see a man whom nature had created for the whole world, bound to one woman and bent under a dishonourable yoke!" She enforced her argument—so Abelard tells us—with long quotations from the apostles and the fathers, with many instances from the classics, and learned disquisitions, so that we suspect that Abelard allowed himself to enlarge on her original remarks: but even he perceived the thought that

was behind her words—the fear that she would be a burden to him, a hindance to his work—her belief that the cares of a household were incompatible with a complete devotion to philosophy. Abelard was not to be moved, and they returned to Paris. After watching together in the church one night in prayer, they were secretly married in the presence of Fulbert and a few friends. Fulbert, however, still animated by a desire for revenge, broke his vow and made public the marriage. Héloïse, whose only thought was to protect Abelard's reputation, swore that no statement could be more false. Fulbert, exasperated, began to treat his niece with cruelty, so Abelard, for her better protection, moved her to the convent of Argenteuil, near Paris, where she had been educated. The Canon, imagining by this that Abelard wished to put away Héloïse, planned a frightful revenge, which was carried out by some hirelings who entered Abelard's chamber at night.

Soon the whole of Paris knew of Abelard's ignominy, and the noisy compassion and pity of disciples and friends were more unbearable to Abelard than the pain of the wound. He saw himself pointed at by the finger of scorn, his career ruined, his enemies triumphant. There seemed to him in his agony no refuge but the cloister, and driven thither, as he tells us, rather by shame than vocation, he decided to become a monk at the Abbey of St Denis. But before he accomplished his vows he insisted on Héloïse taking the veil at the convent of Argenteuil. She, who like himself had no vocation for the religious life,

submitted without hesitation to his desire. "It was your will, not devotion, that forced me, young as I was, into the austerities of the convent," she wrote. "At your command, I would have preceded you or followed you into the burning abyss. My soul was no longer mine, but yours."

It is from Abelard's own pen that we gain the dramatic account of her profession. Surely a scene more human, less veiled even by a semblance of reverence for the step to be taken, has seldom been enacted before the altar. There was no moment's pretence that any thought but the thought of Abelard was in her mind. Friends crowded round her, trying to dissuade her, reminding her of her youth, of the unbearable austerities to which she was condemning herself. She replied through tears and sobs in the words of Cornelia in Lucan: "O noble spouse, whose bed I was not worthy to share! Why should Fate, which has pursued me, oppress thee also? Unhappy that I am, to have formed ties that rendered thee miserable! Receive this my death, which I offer voluntarily in expiation of my fault!" Saying these words she approached the altar, received the veil from the hands of the bishop and pronounced publicly the irrevocable vows.

We cannot here follow in detail the numerous calamities recounted by Abelard between the year 1120, when he became a monk, and the year 1132, when he wrote his letter to a friend. He came into almost immediate conflict with his superiors by his violent protest against the disorderly life of the

monastery. In 1121 he was condemned by the Council of Soissons, as we have already stated, to burn publicly his book on the Trinity. In 1122 he obtained permission to lead a regular life in the character of a hermit. He went to Champagne, and in a meadow beside the River Arduzon he built for himself and a disciple two huts and a small oratory, fashioned from the branches of trees, and reeds from the river, and daubed over with mud and turf. Then followed a scene unique in the history of education. Abelard was compelled by poverty to open school. No sooner was it known that the master was again teaching than scholars from all parts of the country flocked to the valley, abandoning, as Abelard relates, towns and castles to live in a desert, leaving vast domains for little huts constructed with their own hands, delicate foods for roots and herbs and coarse bread, soft beds for straw or moss, tables for mounds of turf. They built a new oratory of wood and stone, which Abelard dedicated first to the Holy Trinity, and then to the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete or Comforter. His renown, he tells us, was again spread through all the world, and, as a consequence, his enemies redoubled their efforts against him. Feeling the nets coiling about him once more, afraid of being accused of heresy, he accepted in a kind of panic the abbacy of St Gildas in Brittany and for twelve years waged unceasing and vain warfare against a horde of unruly monks, who finally sought in all manner of ways to compass his death.

All this while Héloïse was at the Benedictine

convent at Argenteuil. But now the Abbot of St Denis claimed the property as an ancient dependency of his monastery, and obtained a bull from the Pope to eject the nuns. When the news reached Abelard, he invited Héloïse to come with any nuns of her convent to the Paraclete, and made over to her absolutely the oratory and buildings, a donation which was confirmed by the Pope. Héloïse was made abbess in 1131. At first the nuns lived in much anxiety, but gifts and grants from the neighbouring nobles poured in, and soon the abbey was in a prosperous condition. The bishops loved Héloïse as a daughter, says Abelard in this letter, abbots as a sister, laymen as their mother; all admired her piety, her wisdom, her incomparable sweetness of patience. His letter ends with an account of the daily dangers he has to face of poison and the knife from his wild "sons" at St Gildas.

This in brief is the letter which fell into the hands of Héloïse and gave rise to the world-famous correspondence between husband and wife.

The first letter of Héloïse bears the following inscription:—To her lord, yea father; to her husband, yea brother; from his servant, yea daughter; his wife, yea sister; to Abelard from Héloïse.

Twelve years had passed since Héloïse had entered the convent, a girl of eighteen. For twelve years she had performed punctually and with exterior calm the duties of conventual life; nay, more, she had won the confidence of her superiors, the love and

admiration of her fellows. Like Abelard, her whole bent was towards reason, towards science, towards exterior knowledge, and for twelve years she had submitted to a round uninvested with mystery and a discipline to her unmeaning. In all ages there must have been souls like Héloïse to whom the convent was no place of purification, no gateway to the joys of heaven : only a prison, with prison regulations, made the more terrible by the memory of delights shut away for ever. But for her letters we should never have learned whether these austerities had crushed her spirit, or deadened her into mechanical acquiescence, or exhausted her emotional capacity. They reveal, however, a love unquenchable through time and circumstance, which to this very hour has power of moving us profoundly by its depth and fervour. Her piercing anxiety for Abelard's safety amid the perils of St Gildas ; the strong attachments she shows for the buildings Abelard's disciples have raised with their own hands in this desert so recently the haunt of robbers and wild beasts ; her passionate adjurations that as founder of their community he should visit them sometimes, or at least write to them ; the very words she uses ; show the vitality of a flame which burned as fierce and clear in the heart of the woman of thirty as in the heart of the girl of eighteen. Her obedience, she writes, complete and final, her supreme sacrifice of self, were only the logical outcome of her love. Not for his position, not for his genius, not for his wealth, nor for her own pleasure

did she love Abelard, but for himself alone. From God she had no reward to expect: everyone knew she had done nothing for His sake. Abelard alone can give her pain, he alone can give her joy and consolation. "The name of wife may be more sacred and more approved, but the name of mistress is sweeter to me," she writes, "for in thus humbling myself I do less injury to the glory of your genius. Had Augustus, master of the world, thought me worthy of his alliance, I would have held it sweeter and nobler to be your mistress than the queen of a Cæsar." She ends her letter: "Farewell, my all."

We think that this letter must have come as a revelation to Abelard. He may have believed that the convent had brought to Héloïse, if not happiness, at least a measure of peace. How was he, an abbot, a Catholic priest, to answer this passionate appeal? Critics complain that his reply is cold and ecclesiastic, and we admit the justice of the complaint, but we hold that his attitude indicates the extreme difficulty of dealing with the situation, rather than any arid formalism. His letter praises the wisdom of Héloïse, her piety, her fervour. Abelard branches off into a long dissertation on the excellence of prayer. He gives her a form of prayer to be used by the nuns for his salvation, and begs her, if he fall a victim to his enemies, to have his body brought to the Paraclete, "for there is no safer or more blessed spot for the rest of a sorrowing soul."

At this letter from Abelard the floodgates opened. Héloïse could not bear his assumption

that she had become the quiet abbess, forgetful of a past that tortured her almost beyond endurance. In her first letter she has told how her love is the very life-breath of her being; in her second she reveals the anguish of suffering that she has undergone and is still undergoing. Now that they are separated, his well-being is all that is left to her, and, flinging aside all reticence, she arraigns God for His cruelty, His injustice, in punishing them, not before, but after their marriage. "My chastity is praised," she says, "but chastity is of the soul, and my imagination still dwells passionately on all the tender moments of our love. My piety is praised, because I conform to exterior regulations, but how shall that profit me with God if all the while I rebel against my punishment, and am consumed with longing for the old sweet joys which haunt my thoughts without ceasing?"

Abelard could not fail to see in this letter a soul in torment. His reply is still the reply of an ecclesiastic, but of one who strives to bring balm and comfort. There is tenderness in it, emotion; he has forgotten for the moment all his own immediate dangers and difficulties; he remembers that it is his wife who speaks to him, partner of his joy as of his punishment. He invokes her sense of justice, her pride, her responsibility, but he knows that it is only through her love for him that he can hope for lasting influence. So he bids her make their love, rooted in desire, an immortal love, rooted in God. "O my beloved," he writes, "remember

from what perilous abysses God has drawn us with the nets of His mercy! Will you, who were willing to follow me into the burning gulf, refuse to accompany me to Eternal Bliss? Share with me the Grace of God, O my inseparable companion, as you have shared with me my sin and my pardon!"

The appeal was not in vain. In nothing will Héloïse disobey. There shall be no more passionate outpourings. Abelard has imposed silence on her almost unbearable anguish. In all succeeding letters, she is the abbess consulting her spiritual superior.

These letters on points of discipline have, naturally enough, attracted less attention than the love letters, but they throw sharp light on the character of the lovers and from the historical point of view contain matter of deep interest. Asceticism was repugnant to Héloïse, mysticism was absent from her nature. She did not hold that salvation required over-arduous effort, and never doubted that God would reserve her a little corner in heaven. That her life as abbess should have proved so elevating, and her convent have become under her guidance a centre of light, is a proof, not of vocation, but of noble will-power. In asking Abelard to give her nuns a Rule, she pleads for much latitude and a mild discipline. She would have entire liberty left to her nuns as to food and drink; she desires them to be allowed meat and wine; as to fasts, she says, let Christians observe them as an abstention from vice, rather than as an abstention from food. With

many learned allusions, on the authority of Jesus Himself and St Paul and the Fathers, she proves that it is not in exterior acts that we should put our faith, but in interior ones. The Kingdom of God, she quotes, is not in meat or in drink, but in the Holy Spirit. The letter is a very remarkable one for an abbess of the twelfth century. It is independent in judgment, unswayed by authority, full of insight and learning.

Contrasted with her letters, Abelard's seem written in the tone of conventual tradition—though at this time he was composing his most speculative works, among them the "Sic et Non," to which allusion has already been made. True, the Rule he gives is not of excessive rigour, and he shows all observance to the suggestions made by Héloïse. He allows the nuns meat three times a week; on the days they have not meat they are to have two kinds of vegetables and fish. He gives one direction which shows a refinement beyond his time. There is a practice common to many religious houses which he holds in horror: to save the convent linen many wipe their knives on the bread that is to be given to the poor: this he expressly forbids. The nuns are not required to fast more frequently than pious laymen, nor are they to be too much curtailed in hours of sleep. Sleep, says Abelard, refreshes the body, renders it fit for work, keeps it healthy and in good order. The habits are to be of black wool, and the veils, marked with a cross of white thread, are to be made out of dyed linen. Double

habits are to be worn in winter, and the nuns are to have two of every article, so that things may be washed. They are to wear shoes and stockings, never to walk barefooted.

It is clear from these regulations that Abelard as well as Héloïse set himself to oppose the excessive severities that the reformers of the orders sought to force upon the monasteries—severities to which few men were equal, and the breach of which led to continual irregularities. Abelard lays particular stress on the importance of study in convents, not merely of reading, but of reading with intelligence. "And you, too, my dear sister," he writes to Héloïse, "endeavour to dig within yourself a well-spring, a fountain, in order that when you read the Holy Scriptures you can yourself interpret them in accordance with the lessons taught by the Church. You have within yourself a spring of living water, an unquenchable well, a spring of intelligence and reason ; do not allow it to be obstructed by earth and stones."

In Abelard's attitude towards women, as revealed in the letters, there is a curious admixture of the prelate and the original thinker. He holds that women are inferior, yet all his arguments tend to disprove the contention. Woman was created in Paradise, he tells us, and man was created out of Paradise : so Paradise is woman's native land. The last shall be first and the first shall be last : so woman has more honour in the eyes of God than man. Even by the Church virginity is held in

higher renown than celibacy. Virginity requires a special consecration, which can only take place at certain solemn festivals, and only bishops can bless virgins and give them their veils. Perhaps the most interesting statement in Abelard's long discourse on virginity concerns itself with the anointment of Jesus as Priest and King. When Mary broke the vase of precious ointment over His head, He received royal unction from the hands of a woman, and it was as King of Heaven and not as King of Earth that a woman consecrated him. " Judge thereby of the dignity of woman : by her the living Christ was anointed twice, ointment being poured on feet and on head ; from her he received the unction of King and of Priest."

The letters cover approximately a period of ten years. In 1141 the Council of Sens was held, and almost immediately afterwards excommunication was pronounced upon Abelard. He received the news at Cluny, when on his way to Rome to plead his cause with the Pope. The Abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable, proved his friend, received him and gave him high place among his own monks, persuaded the Pope to remove the excommunication, and patched up some kind of reconciliation between Bernard and Abelard. In 1142 Abelard died at St Marcel at Chalons-sur-Seine, whither he had been sent for change of air. Peter the Venerable wrote to Héloïse that Abelard had shown himself more humble than St Germain, poorer than St Martin ; and that neither in soul nor speech nor conduct did

he manifest aught but what was divine, philosophical and wise. Héloïse replied to Peter, asking for the body of Abelard for burial at the Paraclete, and begging for a written and sealed absolution of Abelard's sins. With her requests Peter complied, and Abelard's body was secretly conveyed to the Paraclete, where it was buried. Twenty years after Héloïse herself died, and there is a legend in the Chronicle of the Church of Tours which tells how at her burial the husband opened his arms to receive the wife from whom he had been parted so long, and who was now his for evermore.

Their remains, after many translations, rest in the cemetery of Père la Chaise at Paris. Where in all the world is a spot more fitting than the tomb of Abelard and Héloïse to brood upon "love's bitter mysteries," love's passion, its inspiration, its sacrifice, its suffering, its constancy? Perhaps no other great historical love story includes so large a range of love's experience—glamour so intoxicating, separation so final, purgation so complete. And what gives this love tragedy its abiding appeal is the fact that it was the result not of destiny, but of human miscalculations, weaknesses, ignorances. Abelard and Héloïse, great as they are, are still very man and woman; as truly man and woman under the mask of monastic habit as when the book fell from their hands and they read in each other's eyes the surpassing revelation.

And so it is that the lovers of to-day still place flowers on the grave of these lovers of the twelfth

TOMB OF HÉLOÏSE AND ABELARD

Père la Chaise Cemetery, Paris

century; and the women of to-day still dream with a tenderness that is almost maternal of the love of Abelard, forgiving all its fatalities; and the men of to-day still linger in thought over the love of Héloïse, strong, pure, selfless, unquenchable through time.

ST CLARE

The Lady Poverty

IS it possible for us to understand, even in a slight degree, the Franciscan Ideal of poverty? Poverty to-day is ugly, sordid, cruel; to the Franciscans she was beautiful, noble, kind. She was the Lady Poverty, object of romantic devotion, sought by steep ways, worshipped in story and in song. She was the chosen spouse of Christ, and had followed him where the Virgin herself could not climb, up on the cross itself. She was to the lover his beloved, to the worshipper his saint. "O my dear Lord Jesus, have pity upon me and upon my Lady Poverty," Francis prayed; "for I am consumed with love for her and can know no rest without her." Having nothing, she had all. Spiritual joy and earthly joy were hers to give—spiritual joy, for she opened the treasures of the kingdom of heaven; earthly joy, for she taught the kinship of all creatures in the Creator's love. She was no stern or hard-visaged mentor, but infinitely gracious and tender; she rolled away the barrier of possessions, only to reveal a sweeter and wider inheritance. Not only did the high virtues follow in her train, she was not only, to quote St Francis, "the way to salvation, the nurse of humility and the root of perfection," but where

she passed came flowers and the singing of birds and the sound of happy waters. By her all was sanctified and blessed, every deed consecrated, every meal made sacramental.

"We have lost the power of imagining what this ancient idealization of poverty could have meant," says Professor William James—"the liberation from material attachments, the unbridled soul, the manlier indifference, the paying our way by what we are or do, and not by what we have, the right to fling away our life at any moment irresponsibly, the more athletic trim, in short, the moral fighting shape. . . . It is certain that the prevalent fear of poverty among the educated classes is the worst moral disease from which our civilization suffers."

Let us then pause for one brief moment to look at the Lady Poverty as she appeared to her Franciscan lovers. Francis, when he went to Innocent III. to obtain confirmation of his Rule, described her as a very beautiful woman living in the desert, whom a great king took to wife, and by whom he had noble children. Her praises were sung by minstrels and poets, her perfections were embodied in symbol and allegory. Not only the loveliness of the Lady Poverty made her desirable, but the very difficulty of approaching her added zest to the wooing. In a treatise written by an unknown Franciscan in 1227, a year after Francis's death, the Lady Poverty is described as dwelling on a high mountain, hard of access. We are told how the Blessed Francis went about the highways and the byways of the city, diligently

seeking her whom his soul did love. But poor and great alike despised and hated the name of poverty. At last he saw two old men in a field. " And when the Blessed Francis had come up with them he said unto them : ' Tell me, I beseech you, where the Lady Poverty dwells, where she feeds her flock, where she takes her rest at noon, for I languish for the love of her.' But they answered him, saying : ' O good brother, we have sat here for a time and times and half a time, and have often seen her pass this way, and many were they who sought her. . . . And now, O brother, ascend the great and high mountain whereon the Lord hath placed her. For she dwelleth in the Holy Mountains because God hath loved her more than all the tents of Jacob.' " And then in leisurely fashion we are told how Blessed Francis, with a few faithful companions, climbed the mountain and attained to the Lady Poverty, how for a long space of time they discoursed together, and how finally she followed them down into the plains, and dwelt with them.

This idealization of Poverty, all the tender imagination that clothed an abstraction with graces and attributes, are characteristic of the poet that Francis was—God's minstrel. Like a faithful knight, he must have a lady to worship with body and soul ; like a troubadour, he must praise the Lord he served with joyous song. Brother Leo, his secretary and confessor, tells us in " The Mirror of Perfection " (a book written one year after Francis's death) :

" Drunken with the love and compassion of Christ, the Blessed Francis did at times make such songs, for the passing sweet melody of the spirit within him, seething over outwardly, did oftentimes find utterance in the French tongue, and the strain of the divine whisper that his ear had caught would break forth into a French song of joyous exulting. At times he would pick up a stick from the ground, and, setting it upon his left shoulder, would draw another stick after the manner of a bow with his right hand athwart the same, as athwart a viol or other instrument, and, making befitting gestures, would sing in French of our Lord Jesus Christ. But all this show of joyance would be ended in tears, and the exultation would die out in pity of Christ's passion."

There was one among the friars who had been a troubadour, Brother Pacifico, that in the world was called the King of Verse and the right courteous Doctor of Singers, and Francis would give him sundry of the brothers to go with him throughout the world, preaching and singing the praises of the Lord. " And when the lauds were ended, he would that the preacher should say unto the people : ' We be the minstrels of the Lord, and this largesse do we crave of you, to wit, that ye shall be in the state of true repentance.' And saith he : ' For what be the servants of God but certain minstrels of His that so lift up the hearts of men and move them to spiritual gladness ? ' "

Faithful knights of the Lady Poverty, God's

minstrels that lift up the hearts of men and move them to spiritual gladness : under this guise do we vision Francis and his early companions.

The scenes of the Franciscan story pass before us, clear-cut and vivid, lit by a light of such great purity that all in them of crude, of foolish, of grotesque, fades away, is forgotten, in the beauty of joy, of simplicity, of selflessness. Under a sky limpid blue as the early Italian painters used, but with a radiance that no paint can give, we see the brown-frocked brothers—for brown superseded the earlier grey—preaching in the market-squares, taking food to robbers, going forth with absolute singleness of aim to encounter hardship, contempt, and perhaps martyrdom. "Because they possessed nothing earthly," says the Franciscan Bonaventura, "loved nothing earthly, and feared to lose nothing earthly, they were secure in all places : troubled by no fears, distracted by no cares, they lived, without trouble of mind, waiting without solicitude for the coming day or the night's lodging."

This detachment of spirit from material things —and such detachment of spirit is what Francis meant by poverty—has in many cases involved a denial of the manifold loveliness of creation, a forgetfulness of the kinship of creature with creature. In the case of Francis and the early Franciscans freedom from the bondage of things had an opposite effect : it bestowed an ecstatic delight in natural beauty, a sense of sweetest comradeship, not only with man, but with bird and beast,

with rock and stone, with vines and grass, with fire and water. More than a thousand years before, Plato, in the " Symposium," showed how the soul might mount from the temporal to the eternal, how the beauty of earth might be made a ladder to reach absolute beauty. " The true order of going to the things of love is to use the beauties of earth as steps along which one mounts upward for the sake of that other beauty, going from one to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair actions, and from fair actions to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty and at last knows what the essence of beauty is." Francis was no philosopher ; but we find in his life this difficult saying reduced to simple terms, expounded so as to be understood by the rudest and most unlearned intellect.

Take as an illustration a little scene that is set forth in the " Fioretti." This thirteenth-century collection of episodes, some of them written by Francis's early companions, some of them founded on tradition, have not the authenticity possessed by the contemporary biographies of the saint, but they show him to us as he appeared in the eyes of the people : and literature possesses few things lovelier or more tender than these " Little Flowers of St Francis."

One day going through Provence, says the legend, Francis and his companions came upon a very clear fountain in a solitary spot, by the side of which was a great smooth stone in the form of a table. Francis,

kindled by the beauty of the scene, proposed that they should stop here and dine. So the brothers spread upon the table the alms they had collected. "Our blessed father," says the chronicler, "full of joy and light-heartedness in the midst of such poverty, kept saying over and over again: 'We are not worthy of such vast treasures.' At length, when he had repeated many times these self-same words, Brother Masseo waxed impatient and made answer: 'Father, how can one speak of treasure where is such poverty and lack of all things whereof there is need? Here is no cloth, nor knife, nor plate, nor porringer, nor house, nor table, nor man-servant, nor maid-servant.' Quoth St Francis: 'And this it is that I account vast treasure, wherein is no thing at all prepared by human hands, but whatsoever we have is given by God's own providence, as manifestly doth appear in the bread that we have begged, in the table of stone so fine, and in the fount so clear; whereof I will that we pray unto God that He make us to love with all our heart the treasure of holy poverty, which is so noble, that thereunto did God Himself become a servitor.'"

Herein it is clearly seen that no cold austerity, no gloomy renouncement, is involved in the love of Poverty; merely she sweeps away the barriers that divide God from man, nature from man, creature from man.

It would take too long to tell of the love of Francis for all things created: for the little crested lark "who hath a hood like the Religious"; for the turtle-

doves ("O my sisters, simpleminded turtle-doves, innocent and chaste, why have ye let yourselves be caught?") whom he rescued, and for whom he made nests. His sympathy with the brute creation is embodied in many a popular tradition; we read how the hunted hare found refuge with him, and how he tamed the fierce wolf of Agobio, and how he preached to the birds, marvelling much at so great a company and their most beautiful diversity and their good heed and sweet friendliness, for the which cause he most devoutly praised their Creator in them. Here are his own words as reported by Brother Leo: "An I ever have speech with the emperor, I will entreat him and persuade him and tell him that for the love of God and of me he ought to make a special law that none snare or kill our sisters the larks nor do any evil unto them. In like manner that all the mayors of the cities and lords of the castles and towns be bound every year on the day of the Nativity of our Lord, to compel their men to throw wheat and other grain beyond the cities and walled towns, so that our sisters the larks may have whereof to eat, and other birds also on a day of so passing solemnity . . . whosoever hath an ox and an ass bound on that night to provide them with provender the best that may be, and in like manner also that on such a day all poor folk should be given their fill of good victual by the rich."

There was in Francis's love of every element the extravagance of the poet. So much did he love Brother Fire that he would not put out the flame of

a candle ; when he washed his hands he desired that Brother Water should have a fair place on which to fall. Rocks and streams and woods were holy to him ; hills and mountains, full of the divine. On this point, surely, we may say that Francis has spiritual kinship with the modern poets who see "in the fires on the mountains, in the rainbow glow of air, in the magic light on water and earth, . . . the radiance of deity shining through our shadowy world." We are apt to consider that this view of Nature as " Spirit in her clods Pathway to the God of Gods " is to some extent a development of modern times, and the many superb nature poems that teach initiation through nature have seemed to many a revelation, something new in the history of human experience. Amid the flit and glitter of the enchanted " Woods of Westermain," George Meredith leads the neophyte by the way of self-renunciation to illumination and union. In lines of inspired nature interpretation he teaches us how sweetest fellowship may be made to ensue with the creatures of our kind, and how, if we look with spirit past the sense " Spirit shines in permanence." Swinburne, too, in the overwhelming noontide stress of his great nature poem, "A Nympholept," leads us beyond the " divine dim powers," the pagan Pan and his train—that are earth-born, to that point of deeper vision where earth and heaven are seen to be one—" the shadows that sunder them here take flight And naught is all, as am I, but a dream of thee." Nature also guides Wordsworth by way of passionate rapture and ecstasy to that elevation

of soul by which he perceives in the landscape that "Something still more deeply interfused, Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns And the round ocean and the living globe. . . ." We might multiply instances from modern poets, showing how the world is to them but a fluid envelope. It is, however, unnecessary to labour the point. We would merely lay stress on the fact that all these modern nature poets ought to acknowledge St Francis as their spiritual father; for, writes Brother Leo in "The Mirror of Perfection," "we that were with him did see that he did so greatly rejoice both inwardly and outwardly as it were in all things created, that in touching them or looking thereon his spirit did seem to be, not upon earth but in heaven." Truly holy Poverty brought him treasure inexhaustible of loveliness and of joy, and was herself, in his own words, "a treasure so high-excelling and so divine that we be not worthy to lay it up in our vile vessels; since this is that celestial virtue whereby all earthly things and fleeting are trodden underfoot, and whereby all hindrances are lifted from the soul, so that freely she may join herself to God eternal. And this is the virtue that makes the soul, still tied to earth, hold converse with the angels in heaven, and this it is that hung with Christ upon the cross, with Christ was buried, with Christ rose up again, with Christ ascended into heaven."

But in order to attain to the nuptials with poverty "all earthly things and fleeting must be trodden underfoot." Few have taken this precept more literally

than Francis, and than Clare, his devoted friend and helper. Individual possessions were forbidden by the older orders of religion, but the community might lay up for itself indefinite land and riches ; Francis's plea for poverty, not merely for every Franciscan, but for the Franciscan Brotherhood, was something new, something strange, something that the popes felt ought not to be lightly granted. With what indomitable courage Clare fought for this ideal after the death of Francis will be told hereafter : here let us endeavour to show the practical shape taken by Francis's devotion to his Lady.

" Sell all thou hast and give to the poor," was the first condition of becoming a Franciscan. But renunciation of possessions was no more than a preliminary step. Henceforward shelter was to be of the meagrest, and food begged as an alms. The Franciscans were to live in sheds and cabins and cells made of wattle and dab " after a sorry sort and builded after a mean pattern." The churches were to be small and simple. In this very simplicity and meanness Francis found romance and poetry. " He had no liking for aught in tables or vessels that was of worldly seeming, and whereof remembrance of the world might be recalled ; so that all things might point towards poverty as their end and intent, and *all things chant songs of pilgrimage and exile.*" Once when Francis came to Bologna and found that the brothers had built a great house in his absence, he had them all turned out into the street, sick as well as whole. In " The Mirror of Perfection " we

read how the Lord Bishop of Ostia, afterwards Pope Gregory IX., wept and was much edified at the poverty of the brethren : " And when he saw that the brethren lay on the ground and had naught under them but a little straw and some bolsters, all tattered and torn as it were, and no pillows, he began to weep sore before them all, saying : ' Lo, you here where the brethren sleep, while we wretched ones do make use of so many superfluities ! How will it be with us for this ? ' Moreover, no table saw he there, for that in that place the brethren did eat together on the ground."

It was before the time of his conversion that Francis, in a paroxysm of sympathy, threw off his rich clothes and put on beggars' rags, and for a day sat with the other beggars, begging in French on the steps of St Peter's in Rome. He held that the bread received as alms was holy bread, sanctified by the praise and love of the Almighty. For, " when a brother asks alms he begins by saying, ' Praised and blessed be the Lord our God ' ; then he adds, ' Give me alms for the love of the Lord our God.' Thus praise sanctifies the bread, and it is made blessed by the love of the Lord." God's minstrel speaks here, who sees the radiance of charity shining under the broken fragments. But Francis was not alone in regarding food given in alms as holy. There is a story told that when he was visiting the Lord Cardinal, Bishop of Ostia, he went by stealth from door to door for alms. On his return " Blessed Francis, drawing nigh the table,

did set thereon before the Cardinal such alms as he had found, and took his seat next him at the table, for he would that the Blessed Francis should always sit anigh him. And the Cardinal was thereby some little ashamed that he should have gone for alms and set them on the table, but as at that time he said naught unto him on account of them that were there present seated. And when he had eaten some little, the Blessed Francis took of his alms and sent a portion thereof to each of the knights and the chaplains of my Lord Cardinal on behalf of our Lord God. Who all receiving the same with great gladness and devotion, did spread out their hoods and cassocks, and some did eat thereof, and some did set it aside out of devotion to him."

No scene could illustrate more forcibly the power of Francis's simplicity, nor his literal rendering of the precepts he had laid down. But there was never in his mind any sense of discourtesy to his host, and the Lord Cardinal, after he had spoken with Francis, said: "My son, do whatsoever is right in thine own eyes, forasmuch as God is with thee, and thou art with Him." Indeed, one of the first rules Francis gave his brethren was: "Eat what is set before you." Sometimes he himself would mingle ashes secretly with the rich meats served to him at the tables of the great, but always he held courtesy to others of greater importance than his own abstinence.

It is not easy to renounce fine houses and riches and delicate food and soft raiment: the Franciscan

ideal of renunciation demanded more than this. The final surrender of self for Francis came when he kissed the leper. The love of fellow-man won in this action its complete triumph ; the horror of loathsome disease was lost in the sweet recognition of human kinship. " When Francis ate with the leper and kissed him out of pure love for a suffering human fellow," says Dr Rufus Jones, " he had discovered the true way to rejuvenate Christianity."

Such an action, possible in the Middle Ages, frequent indeed then where utter self-abnegation was sought, and where self-conquest was regarded as a high virtue, has with our greater scientific knowledge, become increasingly difficult and abhorrent. The worship of cleanliness, the study of hygiene—these have raised more insuperable barriers between class and class than any caste system known in the West. Preoccupied with the physical, we have not that faith which can ignore its ugliness and its dirt for the sake of the divine spark it covers. Some of us read the stories of kings and queens washing the feet of beggars with smiling contempt ; yet we can never adequately reach our struggling fellow-men unless we can overcome the repulsion induced by the circumstances in which they live. Francis understood this : with the sublime exaggeration that characterized all his actions, he kissed the leper and ate out of the same dish with him, and so for all time gave the type of absolute selflessness. " You must love the light so well That no darkness will seem fell." So says George Meredith ; and no

great work has ever been accomplished but by loving the light—give it what definition we will.

Francis, with his great capacity for love, love that embraced every human being and every creature, nature inanimate as well as animate, loved specially the light ; loved it so well that disease, sin, death—all the darknesses that cloud our day—vanished in its full radiance. Luxuries, superfluities, possessions and the care that possessions bring, were all let and hindrance to the clear shining of the light ; and that was why the Lady Poverty was Francis's chosen bride. So real to the mediæval mind was this embodiment of Poverty as a lovely woman, that many an early master has painted with concrete detail the Nuptials of Francis and Poverty ; and Dante has celebrated their espousals in unforgotten verse.

"Still young, he for his lady's love forswore
His father ; for a bride whom none approves,
But rather, as on death, would close the door.
In sight of all the heavenly court that moves
Around the Eternal Father, they were wed,
And more from day to day increased their loves.
She of her first love long bereft had led
A thousand years, and yet a hundred more
By no man sought, life hard and sore bested.

But lest my hidden words the truth should veil,
Francis and Poverty these lovers were,
Of whom I weave at too great length my tale :
Their concord, of dear love the minister,
Their joyful air, their loving looks and kind
Did holy thoughts in every spirit stir."

The Little Flower of St Francis

"The Little Flower of St Francis": so Clare called herself in her last testament; and no image could more perfectly express the sweetness and fragrance of the spiritual friendship between Francis and herself. She was in very truth the Flower of Francis's inspiration, fed at the fount of his teaching, unfolding under the radiant influence of his personality; something rare, exquisite, individual, no mere copy of him who next to God was "the master-light of all her seeing," and yet owing to him the impulse of her life. Tenderness was hers, illumination and, above all, courage. Like the northern harebell, there was in her an elasticity and spring that rose vigorous and erect after every tempest. One of the earliest followers of Francis, she embraced Poverty with the same heartwhole devotion as himself. After his death she defended her Lady for twenty-seven years, against brothers who fought for the relaxation of the rule, and popes who hesitated to confirm its privileges. With an intuition born of devotion, she divined the intention of Francis, she read his soul. Co-founder with him, we never see in imagination the brown-robed Franciscan friars without calling to vision the barefooted Clares in their grey habits with black hoods; heroic women, who, like the men, dared the heights of renunciation and abstinence, and who forwent the consolations enjoyed by the friars, of free contact with their fellows and with the world.

The story of Francis and the early Franciscans is the one great story in the history of Christianity of an attempt to walk literally in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Francis and his followers set themselves to obey literally His commands as they understood them. Uninfluenced by the mystical conceptions of Christ elaborated by John and Paul, untouched by the ecclesiastical conception of Christ taught by the hierarchy of the Roman Church, they went straight back to the Gospel narrative, and reproduced as far as lay in their power on the plains of Assisi the life that had been led eleven hundred years before in Palestine. The story has come down to us in a literature naïve and lovely, having that simplicity, that joy, that faith which was the essence of the attempt. Against a lurid background of horrible warfare and shameless Church corruption, we see the little company of friars illumined in an atmosphere of peace and love.

Clare is only a passing light in these histories, and one cannot help regretting that her biography was not written by one of the early companions of Francis. Clare, it is true, had the same "official" biographer as Francis himself—one Thomas of Celano, a Franciscan friar, the reputed author of *Dies Irae*, who wrote her life somewhere between 1265 and 1261—she died in 1253. Brother Thomas, however, rejoiced in a style that ill accorded with the ideal of Franciscan simplicity. He loved tropes and puns and alliteration and high-sounding epithets, and these defects had increased upon him when he

wrote of Clare, a quarter of a century after having written of Francis. It is true that he took great pains to achieve accuracy; he tells us that he examined the *Acta* of Clare which formed the basis of her canonization, and also that he conversed with those brothers and sisters who had known her most intimately. So that, although Thomas of Celano's story lacks the charm, the subtle insight of much of the Franciscan literature, it is at least a transcript of such facts as could be ascertained by a contemporary—a contemporary, be it remembered, with a bias towards conventional ecclesiasticism, and therefore apt to miss or to slur over the elements of freedom and freshness that characterized the movement in its early stages. However, with his help, and help from other more inspired contemporary sources, together with her will, fragments of her correspondence and papal bulls, we will do our best to tell the story of Clare.

Clare was born in 1194 of a noble family of Assisi. She was twelve years younger than Francis, thirteen years old, therefore, when the great change came over his life. Even during her childhood she may have heard speak of the pranks of the gay young cavalier, lover of music and of song, the "flower of youth" in Assisi. During her girlhood, for very different reasons, his name was on every tongue. Francis, out of the very simplicity of his soul, did no action that was not moving, dramatic, symbolic. Clare must have been told how, when Francis was praying at the little ruined wayside church of St

Damian on the slopes below Assisi, a voice had seemed to speak to him out of the wood of the crucifix: "Francis, seest thou not that My house is in ruins? Go and restore it for Me." She must have learned how, accepting the command literally, he had taken bales of cloth from his father's shop, and sold them at the fair at Foligno; she must have known how the anger of his father was kindled against him, and how, in an access of enthusiasm, Francis stripped himself in the Episcopal palace, not merely symbolically, but actually naked, announcing that henceforward he would only say: "My Father which art in heaven, no more my father, Pietro Bernardone." Clare may have seen Francis in the streets of Assisi with his own hands carrying stones to repair St Damian: it was only later that he interpreted the words, "Restore My house," in a wider and more general sense as meaning the Church Universal.

What manner of man would Clare have seen? "Mean to look upon and small of stature," say the "Fioretti." One delightful episode is told in this collection of stories which bears on Francis's appearance. A wood surrounded Our Lady of the Little Portion on the plain below Assisi, where the Franciscans had their first monastery. One day as Francis came out of the wood after prayer he encountered Brother Masseo, who, to test him, said, as though mocking him: "'Why after thee? Why after thee? Why after thee?' Replied St Francis: 'What is it thou wouldst say?' Quoth

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

From an early portrait in the church of Sacro Speco, Subiaco

Brother Masseo: 'I say, why doth all the world come after thee, and why is it seen that all men long to look on thee, and hear thee and obey thee? Thou art not a man comely of form, thou art not of much wisdom, thou art not noble of birth: whence comes it, then, that it is after thee that the whole world doth run?' Hearing this St Francis, all overjoyed in spirit, replied: 'Wilt thou know why after me the whole world doth run? . . . To do this marvellous work the which He purposeth to do, He hath not found upon the earth a creature more vile, and therefore hath he chosen me to confound the nobleness and the greatness and the strength and the beauty and wisdom of the world.'" Brother Masseo was no doubt edified by this reason, but Francis's other companions and Clare would have given another answer to the question, "Why after thee?" if indeed they could have found words at all. For to name the exquisite courtesy of Francis, his sympathy, his joy, the poetry of his nature that touched everything with radiance—these phrases would have seemed to his followers only an empty summary; so far beyond the power of expression is the sway exercised by love and purity and devotion. In the same way we have to animate with flame and with tenderness the more detailed account of his appearance as given by Thomas of Celano. "He was of middle stature," says Brother Thomas, "rather under than over, with an oval face and full but low forehead; his eyes dark and clear, his hair thick, his eyebrows

straight ; a straight yet delicate nose, a voice soft yet keen and fiery ; close, equal and white teeth ; lips modest yet subtle ; a black beard not thickly grown ; a thin neck, square shoulders, short arms, thin hands with long fingers, small feet, delicate skin and little flesh ; roughly clothed, sleeping little ; his hand ever open in charity."

Such was the man into whose keeping Clare gave her soul. She was sixteen when she heard him preach at the church of St George at Assisi, and after that life had only one goal. We are told that Francis was as eager to converse with her as she with him, " being wishful for spoils and having come to depopulate the kingdom of this world," and their meetings were frequent. We quote from Thomas of Celano : " Francis visited Clare, and she more frequently visited him, so ordering the times of their visits that their holy meetings might neither become known by man nor disparaged by public rumour. For, accompanied by a single confidential companion, the girl going forth from her parental home in secret frequently visited the man of God ; to her his words seemed a flame and his deeds more than human. . . . Thenceforth Clare committed herself wholly to the guidance of Francis, considering him to be, after God, the director of her steps."

Some of these meetings took place, perhaps, at St Mary of the Angels, also called St Mary of the Little Portion (" the Little Portion " being the original name of the site on which the church and monastery were built). Here was the first home

of the Franciscans ; here the first brothers lived in little huts and cells constructed out of wattle. The Little Portion stood some two miles outside the gates of Assisi, and half-a-mile from the church of St Damian that Francis had restored with his own hands.

It was arranged between Francis and Clare that on the night of Palm Sunday she should leave all and come to God. She was at that time eighteen years old, tall, as all her pictures show her, with almond-shaped eyes, broad forehead and small chin. The great day of her life dawned, Palm Sunday, 1212. With her parents she went to the cathedral to hear Mass. After the ceremony of blessing the palms, the congregation filed past the bishop, who presented a palm to each. Clare, overcome with emotion, remained in her place. Then the bishop stepped down from the altar and, accompanied by the acolytes bearing tapers, put a palm into the hands of the trembling girl. To her it was an act of solemn consecration, a fitting prelude to the great surrender. Night came. Tradition tells how with her own hands Clare removed the stones and wood that blocked up a " death door " in her father's house ; for it was the custom in Italian cities to block up a door for a year through which a corpse had been carried. A small arched door is still pointed out as being the one through which Clare made her escape. It was her dead self that crossed the threshold, and a new life began with her flight. With a few " holy companions " she passed into

the silent night, fled through the dark streets under the city gates down through the olive groves to the monastery of the Little Portion. Francis and the brothers came out to meet her, bearing tapers. The light flickered on her pale oval face, shone on her golden hair, flashed in the jewels of the rich robe which she still wore. "Do with me as thou wilt!" she cried to Francis. "I am thine! My will is consecrated to God! It is no longer my own." The brothers filed into the choir of the lighted chapel; Clare tore off her rich silks and brocades, and threw her jewels on the floor. With his own hand Francis cut off her hair, and cast over her for garment a piece of sackcloth tied with a knotted rope. The brothers' tapers still light up for us with bright gleam and dark shadow that scene in all its vivid concrete detail; we see the faces tense with triumph and emotion, we feel the overwhelming exaltation of spirit. Then once more Clare went out into the dark night, this time with Francis as companion, went out the bride of Christ, the dedicated virgin of God. Between these two souls that had gone together through such an experience there was a bond that could never be broken; and because Francis was beyond all a poet, a poet who lived out in his life all the poetry and beauty and passion of his nature, we can guess dimly the high spiritual romance that bound Francis and Clare. We can guess dimly only; for such emotions, fervid, intense and yet of crystal purity, are far removed from everyday life. Yet this emotion was not as un-

common as might have been supposed among those who followed the Religious life; many examples of it are to be found even in these pages. But the spiritual love of Francis for Clare and of Clare for Francis stands out for all time as something typical and apart. Francis was so unique in the loveliness of his life and Clare was so steadfast and loyal to the difficult end, that all the incidents of their intercourse are lit with a kind of radiant illumination.

We have to-day largely lost the ambition—almost lost the conception of purity of body, mind and soul. We can hardly understand the refinement of an emotion purged of all material adulteration. Chastity may not have been much practised in mediæval times, but it was at least worshipped as an ideal. No mean ambitions, no sordid cares, no unworthy desires marred the lives of Francis and his earliest followers: the edge of feeling was unblunted by coarse usage, and all the instruments of sense were bright and sharp. We venture to suggest that Clare may have found in the love of Francis a higher consummation than Héloïse found in the love of Abelard. In the love of Francis and Clare, intense, constant, understanding, self had no part; but the rarest natures only could rise to such heights.

On the night of Palm Sunday, after her profession, Francis took Clare to a convent of Benedictine nuns until such time as he could prepare a house for her. Relatives and friends, incensed at her flight, came on Holy Monday in force to compel her to return with them. She clung to the altar cloth, and they used

such violence that it was pulled half away. Uncovering her shaven head, she cried out that Christ had called her to His service and that she was vowed to Him. That her father was finally reconciled to her action is proved by the fact that he bequeathed to her his fortune—which fortune Clare, in obedience to the Franciscan rule, sold and gave to the poor.

A fortnight after Clare's profession, Clare's younger sister, Agnes, a girl of no more than fourteen, fled from home, and, throwing herself into Clare's arms, prayed that they might never be separated any more. Her uncle with twelve men-at-arms followed to the convent to force Agnes home. The soldiers seized the girl and dragged her so roughly down the mountain path that the way was marked with blood. Then the legend tells how Agnes became as lead in their arms, so that they could carry her no farther. The soldiers, seeing in this the finger of God, fled terrified ; and Clare, with tears of happiness, brought her sister back to the convent, where, a few days later, Francis gave her the habit and received her vows.

Adjoining the chapel of St Damian on the olive-clad hillside was a little stone dwelling, and here Francis installed Clare and Agnes—the two first nuns of the Second Order of Franciscans. Héloïse and her nuns lived in the buildings that had been made by Abelard's disciples ; Clare was given the chapel that Francis had restored with his own hands. Daily she prayed before that very crucifix from whose wood a voice had sounded : " Francis, go repair

My house." The crucifix is still preserved in the chapel of St Clare in St George's Church, Assisi, and Clare's convent at St Damian remains in its primitive condition to this day—a small grey building, the pomegranates flowering against its walls of irregular stones, set amongst ancient olive-trees. We may still see her refectory with its low-arched ceiling; her little choir with its worm-eaten stalls; the heavily raftered dormitory reached by a flight of winding steps; her oratory, and the tiny terrace where she made a little garden. For Francis willed in his monasteries that "Brother Gardener ought always to make a fair little garden in some part of the garden-land, setting and planting therein of all sweet-smelling herbs, and of all herbs that do bring forth fair flowers." From her terrace Clare could just see St Mary of the Little Portion, and her thoughts and prayers often tended towards the grey-robed brother there, who, next to God, was the light of her existence.

Clare was soon joined by her sister Beatrice, and by her mother, and by sixteen other ladies of her kindred. For the first three years the sisters of the order do not appear to have been enclosed. We read in a letter written in 1216, and still preserved in the library at Ghent: "The men are called Friars Minor . . . the women dwell in hospices in the environs of cities and live in common on the fruit of their labour, but accept no money." It is certain that Francis used to send the sick to Clare for her to cure them. In Celano's Life we read that she

effected several cures by making the sign of the cross.

There is a legend—it cannot be traced to any definite authority, but it is still told among the Franciscans themselves. We quote from Beryl de Selincourt's book on the Homes of the First Franciscans: "Francis and Clare walked one day to Spello, a little town some seven or eight miles from Assisi in the Spoletan valley where the Camaldulese nuns of the Vallegloria convent desired to come under the Franciscan rule. They went into the inn for food, and mine host was an evil-minded man, who grumbled that it was scandalous for a man and woman to go tramping about the country together under cover of religion. . . . Francis was sad that such things should be thought, and when they left Spello Francis bade Clare return by the upper path which runs along the hillside, and he himself took the road along the valley. Now Clare had not heard the scandal and did not understand, and she called down to Francis to know when they should meet again. And Francis, in confusion, put her off with the phrase: 'When the roses blow on Mount Subasio.' And Clare went forth puzzled, but as she walked, the snow melted before her feet, and behold! briars were blooming in the pathway; and joyfully she picked the flowers and put them in her robe, and gathered it up and ran down the hillside to St Francis, and showed him the roses. And he was convinced that pureminded-ness should triumph, and together they walked back to Assisi." This legend must have been widespread,

for Clare is often pictorially represented with roses in her lap and her bare feet in the snow.

In the year 1219 the Poor Clares were enclosed. Lay-brothers, called Questors, collected alms for them—the bread and broken meat on which the sisters were to live—while certain Friars Minor, called Zealots of the Poor Ladies, ministered to their spiritual need. A small hospice was usually built near the convent for these brothers to inhabit.

Francis himself was long divided in mind as to whether a life of action in the outer world or a life of prayer in the monastery were the higher life. Brother Giles, one of the earliest Franciscans, has described to us in perfect language the joy of contemplation: "Quoth Brother Giles to a certain brother: 'Father, gladly would I know what is contemplation.' And that brother replied: 'Father, I do not yet know.' Then said Brother Giles: 'Meseemeth that the grade of contemplation is a heavenly fire and a sweet devotion of the Holy Spirit and a rapture and uplifting of the mind intoxicated in the contemplation of the unspeakable savour of the divine sweetness, and a happy, peaceful and sweet delight of soul, that is rapt and uplifted in great marvel at the glorious things of heaven above; and a burning sense within of that celestial glory unspeakable.'"

There was a time when Francis longed to give himself to the contemplative life, and in much doubt he sent for Brother Masseo and bespake him thus: "Go unto Sister Clare and tell her on my behalf that

she with certain of her most spiritual companions should pray devoutly unto God, that it may please Him to show me which of the twain is the better: whether to give myself to preaching, or wholly unto prayer. And then go to Brother Silvester and tell the like to him." When Brother Masseo returned St Francis received him with exceeding great love, washing his feet, and making ready for him his meal; and after he had eaten, St Francis called Brother Masseo into the wood; and there kneeled down before him and drew back his hood, stretching out his arms in the shape of a cross, and asked him: "What has my Lord Jesus Christ commanded that I should do?" Replied Brother Masseo: "As unto Brother Silvester, so likewise unto Sister Clare and her sisters has Christ made answer and revealed: that it is His will that thou go throughout the world and preach, since he has chosen thee, not for thyself alone, but for the salvation of others."

In assigning to the sisters the life of contemplation and prayer, Francis may well have conceived that to them had been given the better part. But as we shall see, their life was no life of idleness, and strenuous labour alternated with religious exercises.

The rule of the Clares was a strict one—even in this century, the Poor Clares have only one meal a day, except on Sundays, go barefoot, and endure much hardship. But in early times the sisters were not wholly cut off from the world. We have already told how Francis sent Clare the sick to be cured; the citizens of Assisi were continually coming to the

gates of the convent to consult Clare and ask her help ; Francis entered freely into the convent, that he might talk with her over all the thorny points concerning the constitution of the order, that he might tell her of his spiritual experience, and ask her counsel in the ordering of his life. Other friars had also access within the walls, and in connexion with this we must relate a curious and significant incident, which illustrates Clare's unbounded courage in upholding the Franciscan ideal. Gregory IX., desiring a stricter enclosure for the nuns, decreed that the friars were not to go in and out of the convent under the excuse that they were ministering to the sisters the word of God. Clare immediately resorted to an expedient which to-day is known by the name of the Hunger Strike. " If the holy fathers may not feed us with the bread of life," she said, " they shall not minister to us the bread that perishes." The community therefore refused to eat, and, had not the Pope quickly reversed this decree, no Clare would have been left alive. The Pope could defy Barbarossa, but he had to submit to the heroism and endurance of this handful of women.

The first religious labour that had occupied Francis had been the repair of a ruined church : throughout his life it was his ardent wish to see churches clean and well ordered—we read of his sweeping them out with his own hands. Clare and her sisters entered enthusiastically into this work, weaving church linen and doing church embroidery. Clare, when she was severely ill, had herself propped

up in bed with pillows in order to continue this work entrusted to her by Francis.

The life of the sisters was thus made up of labour and prayer, and they practised austerities unusual for women. It is important, however, to emphasize the fact that Francis himself was strongly opposed to extremes of asceticism. We have already given his Rule: "Eat what is set before you"; he went so far as to tell the brothers that too great abstinence from food was as harmful as too great superfluity of food: "For whereas we be held to beware of superfluity of food, the which is a hindrance both to the body and soul, so likewise, *and even more*, ought we to beware of too great abstinence, seeing that the Lord willeth mercy and not sacrifice." He strictly forbade the wearing of hair-shirts or of spiked chains or other forms of discipline. A brother was not to wear aught save his habit only underneath next the skin. With regard to the Clares, "knowing that from the beginning of their conversion they had led a life passing strait and poverty-stricken, he was moved with pity and compassion towards them. . . . And specially did he admonish them that out of such alms as the Lord might give them they should cheerfully make provision for their bodies with cheerfulness and thanksgiving." Francis did all in his power to check the asceticism of Clare herself. It had been her wont to lie on the bare ground, and fast completely on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. He told her to lie on a sack filled with straw, forbade the three days' fast, and commanded her to eat at

least once a day. It happened on one occasion that Clare fell into meditation on the Lord's passion, and for twenty-four hours neither spoke nor moved; and when night came again a devoted daughter lit a candle and made sign to remind the mother of this command of Francis. But though Clare practised such extreme penance, and though she counselled her disciples to fast daily—*i.e.* take one meal a day—except on Sunday and Christmas Day, she also advocated moderation. She wrote to Agnes of Bohemia: "But as our flesh is not iron, nor have we the strength of marble, I beg you earnestly, beloved sister, to avoid too rigorous abstinence, which I believe you now observe, so that while you live and hope in the Lord, you may render Him a service full of reason, and the sacrifice you offer Him may be seasoned with the salt of prudence."

The friendship between Francis and Clare has its most perfect exposition in one lovely story that is told in the "Fioretti." It is so lovely a story, it shows us with such directness and simplicity the heights of love and devotion, that if it is not true literally, it is true symbolically, and enshrines in a never-to-be-forgotten picture the purity of these two souls. "When as St Francis was at Assisi, oftentimes he visited St Clare, and gave her holy admonishments. And she having exceeding great desire once to break bread with him, ofttimes besought him thereto, but he was never willing to grant her this consolation, wherefore his companions, beholding the desire of St Clare, said unto St Francis:

'Father, it doth appear to us that this severity accordeth not with heavenly charity; since thou givest not ear unto St Clare, a virgin so saintly, so beloved of God, in so slight a matter as breaking bread with thee, and above all bearing in mind that she through thy preaching abandoned the riches and pomps of the world. And of a truth had she asked of thee a greater boon than this, thou oughtest so to do unto thy spiritual plant.' Then replied St Francis: 'Doth it seem good to you that I should grant her prayer?' Replied his companions: 'Yea, father, fitting it is that thou grant her this boon and consolation.' Then spake St Francis: 'Since it seems good to you it seems so likewise unto me. But that she may be the more consoled, I will that this breaking of bread take place in St Mary of the Angels; for she has been long shut up in St Damian so that it will rejoice her to see again the house of St Mary, where her hair was shorn away and where she became the Bride of Jesu Christ; and there let us eat together in the name of God.' When came the day ordained by him St Clare with one companion passed forth from out the convent, and, with the companions of St Francis to bear her company, came unto St Mary of the Angels, and devoutly saluted the Virgin Mary before the altar, where she had been shorn and veiled; so they conducted her to see the house, until such time as the hour for breaking bread was come. And in the meantime St Francis let make ready the table on the bare ground, as he was wont to do. And the hour of breaking bread

being come, they set themselves down together, St Francis and St Clare, and one of the companions of St Francis with the companion of St Clare, and all the other companions, took each his place with all humility. And at the first dish St Francis began to speak of God so sweetly, so sublimely and so wondrously, that the fulness of divine grace came down on them, and they were all rapt in God. And as they were thus rapt, with eyes and hands uplift to heaven, the folk of Assisi and Bettona and the country round about, saw that St Mary of the Angels and all the house and the wood that was just hard by the house, were burning brightly, and it seemed as it were a great fire that filled the church and the house and the whole wood together; for the which cause the folk of Assisi ran thither in great haste for to quench the flames, believing of a truth that the whole place was all on fire. But coming close up to the house and finding no fire at all, they entered within, and found St Francis and St Clare and all their company in contemplation rapt in God and sitting around that humble board. Whereby of a truth they understood that this had been a heavenly flame and no earthly one at all, which God had let appear miraculously for to show and signify the fire of love divine wherewith the souls of those holy brothers and holy nuns were all aflame; wherefore they gat them gone with great consolation in their hearts and with holy edifying." This is too lovely, we think, to be one of the many inventions of man. The food spread on the bare ground, the grey-robed

brothers and sisters, the stillness, the oneness, the uplifting that took the physical effect of fire—in all this there is a purity, a radiance, that would seem to raise it into a domain even above imagination.

St Mary of the Angels has no more fragrant memory than this sacramental meal of Francis and Clare : St Damian, too, gains a special tenderness by reason of those forty days that Francis lay, sick almost unto death, in a little wattle hut under the convent walls. Weak, sleepless, nerve-exhausted, he suffered cruel bodily pain, and Clare nursed him, soothing him with gentle ministrations, putting about him an atmosphere of quiet and of peace; restoring confidence and hope. If their companionship did not this time show in physical flame, it engendered a spiritual flame, whose visible effects have come down to us in a poem, joyous, loving, intimate, " The Canticle of Brother Sun." Not only is this song precious because of its beauty and because it is the only song of Francis's that we possess ; the circumstances in which it was written give it an additional halo. For this song of rapture was born out of sharp suffering ; this chant of kinship was inspired by weeks of exquisite tenderness. We fancy that the voice of Clare mingles in the verses :

" Praised be thou, my Lord, with all thy creatures, especially milord Brother Sun, that dawns and lightens us.
And he, beautiful and radiant with great splendour, signifies thee, Most High.
Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars that thou hast made, bright and precious and beautiful,

Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Wind, and for the air and cloud and the clear sky, and for all weathers through which thou givest sustenance to the creatures:
Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water, that is very useful and humble and precious and chaste:
Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Fire, through whom Thou dost illumine the night, and comely is he, and glad and bold and strong.
Be praised, my Lord, for Sister our Mother Earth : : :[1]

And finally he has praise for Sister Death.

We cannot help comparing this canticle of St Francis with a Bengali poem of the people given by Margaret Noble in her "Web of Indian Life." There is in the Bengali poem greater discrimination as to the relationship of the elements to ourselves, and they are more strongly infused with the Deity; but both poems have the same sympathy, the same sensitive understanding, the same quick response.

"Oh, Mother Earth, Father Sky,
Brother Wind, Friend Light,
Sweetheart Water,
Here take my last salutation with folded hands,
For to-day I am melting away into the supreme,
Because my heart became pure
And all delusion vanished
Through the power of your good company.[1]

Francis often made songs for the Poor Ladies, as we read in "The Mirror of Perfection": "After that the Blessed Francis had made his 'Praises unto the Lord of His creatures,' he made also certain holy words with music for the comforting and edification of the Poor Ladies, knowing that they

were sore troubled by reason of his infirmity. And for that he was not able to visit them in person, he sent the words unto them by the companions. . . . For he perceived that their conversion and holy conversation did not only tend to the exaltation of the brethren's religion, but to the exceeding great edification of the Church Universal."

In very truth Clare sorely needed all the help that he could give her. For "in the week that the blessed Francis did pass away," writes Brother Leo, "the Lady Clare, the first sapling of the Poor Sisters of St Damian of Assisi, the chiefest rival of the Blessed Francis in the observance of gospel perfection, fearing lest she should die before him, for at that time both lay grievously sick, wept most bitterly and would not be comforted for that she thought that she should not see before her departure her one father after God, the Blessed Francis, her comforter and master and her first founder in the grace of God. And therefore did she signify this unto the Blessed Francis by a certain brother, which when the holy man did hear, forasmuch as he did love her above all other with fatherly affection, he was moved with pity towards her. But considering that the thing she would, to wit, to see him, could not be brought about, for her consolation and that of all the sisterhood, he did write unto her his blessing in a letter, and did absolve her of all defect. . . . (He) said unto the brother whom he had sent: 'Go and tell Sister Clare to lay aside all sorrow and sadness for that she cannot see me

just now, forasmuch as in truth let her know before her departure both she herself and my sisters shall see me, and shall be greatly comforted as concerning me.' " Little did Clare realize the import of these words, nor understand what sad comfort they offered her. " But it came to pass when a little while afterward the Blessed Francis had passed away in the night, that on the morrow the whole people and clergy of Assisi came and took away his holy body from the place where he had passed away with hymns and lauds, each one bearing aloft branches of trees, and thus did they carry the same by the will of the Lord to St Damian, so that the word might be fulfilled which the Lord had spoken by the Blessed Francis for the comfort of His daughters and His handmaidens. And removing the iron lattice whereby the sisters were wont to communicate and to hear the word of God, the brethren took the holy body from the bier, and held it between their arms for a long space at the opening until that the Lady Clare and her sisters had been comforted by the sight thereof and could kiss the wounded hands, albeit they were overcome and full of sorrow and many tears seeing themselves made orphans of the consolations and admonitions of so dear a father."

There are other accounts, more detailed and embroidered, but in this story, given in " The Mirror of Perfection," we have the high dignity, the restraint, of a greater grief. No ordinary gestures of sorrow could express the loss that Clare had sustained.

Clare was thirty-two when Francis died. Already; even during his lifetime, he had had the grief of seeing the cause for which he had fought so valiantly gradually losing ground, the Lady Poverty despised and neglected, and elaborations, mitigations, alterations, introduced into his Rule. "He also scented aforehand the times that in no long space were to come," says Brother Leo, "wherein, he foreknew that the knowledge which puffeth up should be the occasion of falling." Clare lived into those times; and with all the tenacity of her strength she set herself against the innovations. Not Francis himself laboured more courageously in defence of Lady Poverty. How great was her task, and how soon after his death a proposal was made to reverse his ideals, is shown in the following incident. In 1228 Pope Gregory came to Assisi for the canonization of Francis. Actually on the eve of the ceremony that was to confer on Francis the title of Saint, the Pope tried to induce Clare to be unfaithful to the vows that Francis had imposed upon her. It did not seem to him right that women should support the rigours of absolute poverty. He visited Clare, and begged her to accept some endowment for her convent. "If it be thy vow that hindereth thee from doing so," he added, "we absolve thee from it." "Holy father," she replied, "absolve me from my sins if thou wilt, but I desire not to be absolved from following Jesus Christ."

Clare's influence must have been an exquisite one; all who met her carried from her presence an

ST. CLARE HOLDING HER EMBLEMS, WITH ST. ELIZABETH
From the painting by Tiberio d'Assisi

impression of something rare, pure, fragrant; all yielded to her desires. Innocent III. had granted to Clare when she became abbess in 1215 the title for her community of Poor Ladies. Gregory IX. granted the Clares the right never to be forced to receive possessions by the famous bull, "Privilegium Paupertatis" (1228). As it contained a privilege never before given by the Holy See, the Pope wrote the first letters of the bull with his own hand. The original bull is still preserved in the choir of the Clares at Assisi. But it was not till the day before her death in 1252 that Clare received the bull of the then Pope Innocent IV. confirming the definitive Rule of St Clare; and sanctioning the practice of poverty in all its pristine purity. Clare is said to have died clasping in her arms this bull, for which she had fought so untiringly. The original document was found as recently as 1893 at the convent of St Clare at Assisi, wrapped inside an old habit of the saint!

Clare during her lifetime founded convents at Perugia, Arezzo, Padua, Rome, Venice, Mantua, Bologna, Spoleto, Milan, Siena, Pisa, and many of the principal towns in Germany. There were in later times sixty-five houses of Poor Clares in England. The word "Minories" is a corruption of Minoresses, Sisters Minor or Clares, who had a house in that district of London.

Clare was in very truth as she has been called, "the valiant woman of the Franciscan movement." "In some respects," says Fr. Paschal Robinson, a

Franciscan himself, and the latest editor of Thomas of Celano's Life, "she was even more virile than Francis himself. Not only did she face with unflinching moral courage principalities and powers, and wrest from them the privileges she desired, but her physical courage was put to the severest tests, and emerged triumphant."

It is a curious fact that the Franciscan story seems detached from the history of the time. It is of course mediæval in many of its aspects, and yet it stands apart from current ambitions and interests. The Franciscan movement appears a sudden spontaneous development and loveliness, nor can we easily say from what sources its roots were nourished and its growth stimulated. Nevertheless, the thirteenth century was a period of warfare that devastated Europe; Pope and Emperor were at daggers drawn; nations were divided against nations, cities against cities, nobles against nobles, classes against classes. The story of Clare now suddenly intersects the history of her time.

Frederick Barbarossa, the excommunicated Emperor, employed in his warfare against the Pope certain mercenaries called "Saracens"—the descendants of the Saracens who had settled in Sicily and Calabria. After a victory of the imperial troops, these "Saracens" overran Italy, committing frightful devastation. Women in convents had special reason to dread the coming of such invaders. The following incident is told in the "official" Life of St Clare, and tradition offers many variations on the

central theme. We give, as most accurate, Thomas of Celano's account. Assisi was assailed by the Saracens; the nunnery of St Damian was surrounded; the Saracens were scaling its walls. Clare was on a bed of sickness; for months she had not left her bed. The nuns went in tears and terror to their mother; she caused herself to be borne to the chapel and, taking "a silver casket enclosed in ivory in which the body of the Holy of Holies was most devoutly kept," she prostrated herself before the Lord in prayer, and prayed to Christ to defend His servants. "Presently He sent her of His special grace a voice as of a little child which sounded in her ears: 'I will always defend thee.' 'My Lord,' she said, 'and if it please Thee protect the city, for it supporteth us for love of Thee.' And the Lord answered: 'It will be troubled, but it will be defended by My protection.' Then the virgin, raising her tearful face, comforted the weeping, saying: 'Rest assured, I bid you, little daughters, that ye shall suffer no harm; only trust in Christ.'" Taking the pyx in her hands, she approached the point of danger. The Saracens had climbed over the outer wall, and were now scaling the inner wall. But at the sight of Clare holding the pyx a sudden terror fell upon them and they fled in confusion. A traditional story tells that the Saracens were routed by the appearance of Clare at a window holding the pyx. The window is pointed out to this day; and Clare is often represented in art holding a pyx in her hands. In commemoration of this event, an

ancient statute decreed that the magistrates of Assisi, with the clergy, confraternities and citizens, were to assemble annually on the 22nd of June at the church of St Clare, and to proceed in procession to St Damian, there to celebrate a solemn mass of thanksgiving for the deliverance of the city by the prayers of St Clare. And further, the Poor Clares were granted the privilege of exposing the Sacrament on their altars without the interposition of a priest—a privilege no other women possess.

But if this Little Flower had the strength to meet storm and tempest without flinching, she possessed also the tenderer qualities of womanhood. We read how, in the cold winter nights, she went round the dormitories putting warm covering on the sleeping sisters, how gently she nursed the nuns who were ill, and washed the feet of poor travellers.

It was at St Mary of the Little Portion that Clare made her profession ; at St Mary's that she celebrated the sacramental meal which showed as fire in all the surrounding country ; at St Mary's that she passed in spirit her last Christmas on earth (1252), and Thomas of Celano writes of it as "a truly wonderful consolation which the Lord granted her in illness. At the hour of the Nativity," he says, "when the earth sings with the angels of the new-born babe, the other Ladies went to the oratory for matins and left the Mother alone, weighed down with illness. Clare then began to think on the little Jesus and to grieve sorely that she might not be

present at His praises, and said, with a sigh : ' Lord God, behold I am left alone with Thee in this place.' And lo ! suddenly the wonderful music that was being sung in the church of St Francis began to resound in her ears ; she heard the voices of the friars chanting the Psalter, she listened to the harmonies of the singers, she even perceived the sound of the organ. She was by no means so near to the place that all this could happen in the natural order, unless either the solemnity was brought nearer to her by divine influence, or her hearing was endowed with superhuman power."

We are told in detail—as the mediæval chronicler uses—of her death agony, which lasted many days, and how, two days before her death, Innocent IV., who was on his way from Lyons to Perugia, visited her and gave her his apostolic benediction. Cardinals and prelates were constantly at her bedside, and when Brother Rainaldo exhorted her to patience in the long martyrdom of such great infirmities, she replied : " Believe me, dearest brother, that ever since the day I received the grace of vocation from our Lord through his servant Francis, no suffering hath ever troubled me, no penance been too hard, no infirmity too great." As the end approached, many of the early disciples of Francis gathered about her—Leo and Angelo, two of the Three Companions, and Juniper—would that I had a whole forest of such Junipers ! Francis had been wont to exclaim. The brothers read aloud to her the Passion of Our Lord according to St John, as they had done twenty-seven

years before at St Mary of the Angels when Francis lay dying. "When brother Juniper, the renowned jester of the Lord, who often uttered fiery words of God, appeared amongst them, Clare, filled with new joy, asked him whether he had anything new at hand about the Lord. Juniper thereupon opening his mouth, sent forth like sparks such flaming words from the furnace of his burning heart that the virgin of God derived great consolation from what he said. Then she blessed all who had been kind to her, both men and women, and invoked a benediction rich in graces upon all the Ladies of the poor monasteries, present and to come. As to the rest, who can relate it without tears? Two of the holy companions of the blessed Francis stood near. One of them, Angelo, though weeping himself, comforted the rest in their sorrow. The other, Leo, kissed the bed of the dying saint." The sisters stood round, trying in vain, as the rule of the cloister bade, to suppress the violence of their sorrow. And after watching all night, towards dawn on the 11th of August 1253, one of them saw through her tears the room fill with a multitude of virgins, clothed in white garments and wearing golden crowns. As Clare's soul passed away, the virgins of the vision covered the body with a mantle of wondrous beauty. On the twelfth, the day kept as her festival, Clare was buried. Her body was first laid in the church of St George within the city walls, while the great church of St Clare was being erected in her honour. In 1260 her remains were translated with great pomp to this church, and buried

deep beneath the high altar. In the same year the Poor Clares moved to a new convent that had been made for them in the city, partly for greater security, and partly that they might be near the body of their foundress. Clare was canonized in 1255 by Alexander IV.

It is much more difficult to form a clear picture of Clare the woman than of Francis the man. The endeavour of Brother Thomas was to write a devout book for the edification of his readers, and he followed as far as possible the conventional traditions of sainthood. But strong individual character breaks even through the official Life ; courage to resist, tenacity to secure, unswerving loyalty to the ideals of Francis. Clare had besides a fragrance of personality that won all comers ; popes, cardinals, prelates, loved her, we read, with fatherly affection, or with mystical devotion. It is when we wander in body or in thought through the little deserted rooms of St Damian that we can best conjure up the tall figure in the grey habit, praying, teaching the sisters, passing from oratory to choir, tending her terrace garden, bedridden in later years, propped up and with failing fingers labouring at her needle. Here at St Damian, in little bare stony cells, where rough windows gave on " slender landscape and austere," Clare worshipped the Lady Poverty, and that way found, as Francis had found, happiness ; for all her biographers tell us that her face was lighted by interior joy, " like sunshine " we imagine " behind a white flower."

Without Clare the Franciscan story loses half its loveliness. Francis was her inspiration, we know, but we can only guess how she inspired and influenced him, bringing into his life an exquisite element of womanhood, without which it could not have been complete. However heroic she proved herself in later years, fighting it may be for a cause that was to some extent lost, it is in her early years that we are fain to remember her : as one of that little company of brothers and sisters whose lives are sweet for all time, set in an atmosphere of peace and of light and of love.

DAME JULIANA OF NORWICH

Calor, canor, dulcor

BEFORE we endeavour to describe the work of Dame Juliana of Norwich, it seems well to give some indication of the condition of thought at the time she lived, to tell a little about others who then attempted the solitary life, and to discover, if possible, some of the characteristics distinguishing English mysticism in the fourteenth century from the mysticism of European countries.

The mystic uses varying shapes, varying symbols, often inappropriate, necessarily imperfect, to convey his transcendental experiences to those who have not travelled his path. The images are coloured by temperament, by circumstance, by period. In the fierce Italian cities the symbols have the semblance of blood and fire ; austere Spain touches its images with solemn gloom, and gives us the Dark Night of the soul ; modern Ireland takes dim mists and pale flowers as her raiment for clothing the unseen—her primroses are "but a veil, A rag of beauty, hiding immortal brows From easily daunted eyes." But mediæval England, with its zest for outdoor life, its delight in exterior nature, uses symbols that are racy of the soil, that have a savour of sweet earth ; often spiritual experience is expressed in terms of physical sensa-

tion. Thus the "Father of English mysticism," Richard Rolle of Hampole, translates his spiritual experience into the symbols of *calor*, *canor*, *dulcor*, Fire, Song, Sweetness—a Fire and a Sweetness actually felt in the body, a divine melody actually chiming in the soul.

The effect of so expressing the truths of another world is to convey to the reader a sense of their immediacy. The divine is here and now; Paradise is in startling proximity with England; Jacob's ladder, in Francis Thompson's memorable phrase, is pitched "betwixt heaven and Charing Cross." The use of the vernacular further intensifies this effect; for in England as well as on the Continent explorers of the spiritual world were beginning at this time to employ their native tongue as more apt to bring home their experience than the traditional Latin.

This closeness to Mother Earth, this application of the symbols of physical sensation, gives to English mysticism a homeliness which is all its own. This homeliness finds its tenderest consummation in the description of the relationship between Creator and creature. It is the relationship of father and mother to child, in all its loveliness and trust. "As verily as God is our Father, so verily God is our Mother," writes Dame Juliana. He is "the might and the goodness of the fatherhood," and "the wisdom of the motherhood." Indeed, the whole concern of the English mystics is the love of God for man, and not the love of man for God. The realization of God's love has come to them with a fulness that pulses

through all their writings a very tide of joy. There is no soul too weak, too sinful, too miserable, for God's mercy and healing. Thus English mysticism has given us a literature unequalled in buoyancy and exultation, at the opposite pole from the far more extensive literature of self-abasement, which has sprung largely from the terror of spiritual pride. But even spiritual pride is not always to be condemned without appeal, and the following passage from "The Flowing Light of God," a book by Mechthild of Magdeburg, a nun of the thirteenth century, may serve to show how lovely and tender even arrogance may be:—

"Drawn by yearning, the soul comes flying like an eagle towards the sun. 'See how she mounts to us, she who wounded me' (it is the Lord who is speaking), 'she has thrown away the ashes of the world, overcome lust, and trodden the lion of pride beneath her feet. Thou eager huntress of love, what bringest thou to me?'

"'Lord, I bring Thee my treasure which is greater than mountains, wider than the world, deeper than the sea, higher than the clouds, more beautiful than the sun, more manifold than the stars, and outweighs the riches of the earth!'

"'Image of my Divinity, ennobled by my manhood, adorned by my Holy Spirit, how is thy treasure called?'

"'Lord, it is called my heart's desire; I have withdrawn it from the world, withheld it from myself, forbidden it all creatures. Lord, where shall I lay it?'

" ' Thou shalt lay thy heart's desire nowhere else than in my divine heart and on my human breast. There only wilt thou be comforted and kissed by my spirit.' "

English anchoresses have less dazzle of vision and they speak a simpler language ; but they portray with equal tenderness if less splendour this sense of intimate personal relationship. It is even found in the fragmentary wreckage of lost works. Of Margery Kempe, Anchoress of Lynn, we know nothing beyond what is contained in a tiny quarto of eight pages printed by Wynkyn de Worde : " Here begynneth a shorte treatyse of contemplacyon taught by our lorde Jhesu cryste, or taken out of the boke of Margerie Kempe of Lynn." An extract will suffice to show the thoughts that dwelt with Dame Margery in her narrow cell. Jesus is speaking :

" I assure thee in thy mind, if it were possible for Me to suffer pain again, as I have done before, Me were lever to suffer as much pain as ever I did for thy soul alone, rather than thou shouldst depart from Me everlastingly."

And Dame Juliana, Anchoress of Norwich, writes :

" Then said Jesus, our kind Lord : *If thou art pleased, I am pleased : it is a joy, a bliss, an endless satisfying to me that ever suffered I passion for thee ; and if I might suffer more, I would suffer more.*"

Seldom has the love of Christ for man been more poignantly realized. *For one soul alone* He would

have suffered "as much pain as ever I did": for another: "If I might suffer more I would suffer more." Yet in these thoughts of the anchoresses there was no spiritual pride; surpassing love was around and about them, and in its brightness human failings faded away.

It was the solitary life in England that produced this attitude of soul; the solitary life that gave us the writings of the too little known Richard Rolle, hermit of Hampole. His story is one of profound interest on which we must pause for a moment: his burning experience stands out sharp against the foil of an age given to many-coloured luxury, an age black with misery and wrong. In a time of rapacious self-seeking he preached in the wilderness the doctrines of love and of peace; he wakened men once more to the knowledge that they possess not only the eyes of the body, that look without, but the eyes of the soul, that look within.

From every point of view the story of Richard Rolle is full of significance. Mediæval mysticism in England claims him as its founder; on the scientific side of mysticism, the stages of his explorations into the unseen are marked with extraordinary lucidity; on the devotional side, his works show an insight, a range, a passionate fervour that makes them live to-day. Literature remembers him as the first writer of mediæval English prose, and as to his life, Mr C. Horstman, editor of his works, calls him "one of the noblest men of his time, yea, of history . . . a hero, a saint, a martyr." For many centuries his

story has been lost in obscurity ; now the mists begin to clear away, and we see, sharp-cut as in a crystal, the little remote scenes in which he lived and strove, scenes that have a significance more poignant and more profound than the brilliant pageantry of popes and kings. We are in the year 1319, at Thornton in the North Riding of Yorkshire.

We see a young man, tall, fair of complexion. He is a student of Oxford, and went to the university with that same zeal for learning which distinguished the Clerk in Chaucer's "Prologue." Oxford was in the zenith of its influence, and entirely under the dominion of the scholastic philosophy, which had been introduced there by the famous Duns Scotus (died 1308). Against this formalism, this intellectualism, this deification of reason, Rolle's whole nature revolted. In secret he studied the mystics, St Bernard, Richard of St Victor, Bonaventura. In his quiet Yorkshire home he longed to take some dramatic step, to express by some exterior action the devotion, the fervour that consumed him. At last the tension became past bearing. From his sister he borrows two kirtles, a white one and a grey one ; he takes a hood of his father's. He cuts off the buttons of the white frock and the sleeves of the grey, dons the white one next his skin and the grey one over it, and puts on the hood. His sister, frightened by his wild looks, cries out that he is mad. Clad thus in the semblance of a hermit, he rushes from the house.

The scene changes : it is the Eve of the Assump-

tion : we are in a church on John de Dalton's estate (probably at Topcliffe near Thirsk). Suddenly a figure clad in strange guise enters the church and takes his place on the spot where Lady Dalton is wont to pray. On her arrival her servants wish to drive him off, but, seeing him so earnest in his devotions, she will not let him be disturbed. Her sons recognize him as Richard Rolle, whom they had known at Oxford. " Next morning he puts on a surplice and sings in the choir at matins and Mass ; after the gospel he, having first obtained the benediction of the priest, ascends the pulpit and delivers a sermon, so moving the hearts of the hearers that they all wept, and declared they had never heard anything like it before. After Mass, John de Dalton invites him to dinner : he hides himself in an outhouse from sheer humility, but is found and placed at table before the sons of the house. . . . After dinner the host takes him aside, asks him whether he is really the son of William Rolle, and having satisfied himself as to the sincerity of his purpose, invites him to remain in the house, and provides him with the proper habit of a hermit, a solitary cell on his estate and his daily sustenance." [1]

This profession of Richard Rolle's is as dramatic as any in the annals of Christianity. The picture is full of local mediæval colour ; we are in an age when it is still possible, though, as we shall see, increasingly difficult, for devotion to take this fantastic shape. The story of Rolle's life, full of grotesque incident, of

[1] " Richard Rolle and his Followers," C. Horstman.

tragic conflict, of high romance and endeavour, gives us illuminating sidelights into the opinions of the time ; but in the story of his soul we follow a more trodden path, a path taken by the mystics of all ages.

During the four years that Richard Rolle remained in the cell on John de Dalton's estate, he passed through the three stages of mysticism described by St Augustine : the stage of Purgation, the stage of Illumination, the stage of Union. Some time after having attained the stage of Union, he realized the joy which he described in the terms *calor*, *canor*, *dulcor*. " Sitting one day in meditation in a certain church," we read, " he suddenly felt in him a strange and pleasant heat, as of real, sensible fire, so that he often felt his breast to see if the heat was caused by some exterior cause ; but finding that it arose from within, and not from the flesh, and was a gift from his Maker, he was all liquefied in love, and the more so because with the cauma he felt a dulcor inexpressibly sweet." But more persistent than the fire and the sweetness chimed that " musica spiritualis " that " invisibilis melodia," that "clamour," " mirth " and " sound " of heaven, which is the perpetual theme of Richard Rolle's writings.

Carlyle has said that all deep thought is music ; and highly charged emotion utters itself in rhythmic speech, and touches all the organ-notes of language. Song, too, is the natural expression of joy. The ancients held that the spheres moved to music ; and the music of the soul seems to the mystic a

remote echo of far-off harmonies. "Song I call," says Richard Rolle, "when in a plenteous soul the sweetness of eternal love with burning is taken, and thought into song is turned, and the mind into full sweet sound is changed." His soul was "as the nightingale, that loves song and melody, and fails for great love." And as Rolle heard song within, so he uttered it without, in lyrics of great passion and beauty. His own writings move, most of them, to rhythm and have the music of alliteration.

We learn more of this interior music of the soul from the English mystics of the fourteenth century than from any other source, and our readers will perhaps pardon us for dwelling for a moment on a point of such deep interest. Walter Hilton, a disciple of Richard Rolle, has treated this subject with much insight and in a spirit more analytic than that of his master. In his "Song of Angels" he classifies the "ghostly sound and sweet songs in divers manners" that some men feel in their hearts. He is careful to distinguish the music that is born of God, from the music that is born of vain imaginations. Some men by violence, he says, seek to behold heavenly things before they are made spiritual by grace; and by "indiscreet travailling" they turn the brains in their heads, and overtax the mights and wits of the soul and body. "And then, for feebleness of the brain, him thinketh that he heareth wonderful sounds and songs. . . . And of this false ground springeth errors and heresies, false prophecies, presumptions and false reasonings . . . and many other mis-

chiefs." Hilton describes the song of the soul thus, which he distinguishes from the song of the angels: "Some man setteth the thought of his heart only in the name of Jesu, and steadfastly holdeth it thereto, and in short time him thinketh that that name turneth him to great comfort and sweetness, and him thinketh that the name soundeth in his heart delectably, as it were a song; and the virtue of this liking is so mighty that it draweth in all the wits of the soul thereto. . . . But this is not angels' song; but it is a song of the soul by virtue of the name and by touching of the good angel."

In a passage of great beauty, Walter Hilton tells us what is angels' song. "For when the soul is lifted and ravished out of the sensuality, and out of the mind of any earthly things, then in great fervour of love and light (if our Lord vouchsafe) the soul may hear and feel heavenly sound, made by the presence of angels in loving of God. Not that this Song of Angels is the sovereign joy of the soul; but for the difference that is between a man's soul in flesh and an angel, because of uncleanness, a soul may not hear it, but by ravishing in love, and needeth to be purified well clean, and fulfilled of much charity, or (before) it were able to hear heavenly sound. Now, then, me thinketh that there may no soul feel verily angels' song nor heavenly sound, but he be in perfect charity; though all that are in perfect charity have not felt it, but only that soul that is so purified in the fire of love that all earthly savour is brent out of it, and all mean letting (inter-

vening hindrance) between the soul and the cleanness of angels is broken and put away from it. . . . Who so then will hear angels' song, and not be deceived by feigning of himself, nor by imagination, nor by the illusion of the enemy, him behoveth for to have perfect charity, and that is when all vain love and dread, vain joy and sorrow, is cast out of the heart, so that it love nothing but God, nor dread nothing but God, nor joyeth, nor sorroweth nothing but in God, or for God."

When the purification of body and soul offered bliss so exquisite, it is little wonder that the solitary life made urgent appeal to many great souls. Rolle, indeed, endeavoured to found a community of hermits; but his "Regula Heremitarum" brought him no disciples, and his own bitter experience might have taught him that the time for such a revival on a large scale was past. Solitary places in England were no longer easy to find because the greater part of the land had been "acquired" by private owners; the Church looked askance at these laymen, neither monks nor priests, professing no recognized rule; there was growing rebellion amongst the people against the horde of lazy begging "hermits" who infested the countryside, and who come under the fierce lash of Piers Plowman in his Vision. Rolle asked only a lonely place of abode and some provision for his simple needs; but pious friends were hard to find and possibly hard to get on with, and the hermit moved from manor to manor, pursued by misunderstanding and calumny.

The intensity of his message, the asceticism of his life, made him enemies among the pleasure-loving clergy; his continual wanderings were the subject of severe comment by laymen, as unbefitting his profession; all manner of grotesque censures were levelled against him—he was even accused of being a glutton. For some years persecution followed him hard. We find him going from village to village, talking familiarly with the people, preaching peace and love. One door of his heart had already opened upon heaven when he experienced the gifts of *calor*, *canor*, *dulcor*; another door now opened upon earth, letting in tender pity for human suffering, deep sympathy with human needs.

The sensation of interior joy he never lost, but persecution and trial had been hard to bear. He was now thirty-five years old, and weary with long buffeting. It was to a woman that he owed renewed peace and happiness of mind. Little is known of Margaret Kirby. She was an anchoress of Yorkshire, and her cell was twelve miles from that of Richard Rolle. Between these two existed one of those lovely spiritual friendships that illumine so many histories of recluses in the past. She was his disciple, and he taught her in the art of the love of God. To her he wrote many of his epistles, including "The Form of Perfect Living." (It is a remarkable fact that all his epistles are written to women.) He had women friends also in certain of the nunneries of Yorkshire, and during the concluding years of his life he lived in a little cell in

or near the grounds of the small Cistercian convent at Hampole. He was regarded by the sisters as a saint, and acted as their spiritual adviser. He died in 1379, probably of the Plague, and was buried at Hampole : the rumour spread that miracles were worked at his grave, which soon became famous as a place of pilgrimage.

Even to-day something original, rugged, fiery in his character arrests and draws us. Himself an inspired singer in that age that was but just finding its tongue, he heard, and has described for us more vividly than any other, the interior music of the soul—" a heavenly melody, intolerably sweet."

We must refrain, however, from putting final stress upon these experiences of Fire, Sweetness and Song, as though their achievement were the sole aim and object of the English mystic. Mystical literature offers no more forcible passage on the danger of visions and auditions than the one written by Rolle's disciple, Walter Hilton. " If it be so," says Hilton, " that thou see any manner of light or brightness with thy bodily eye or in imagination, other than every man seeth ; or if thou hear any pleasant wonderful sounding with thy ear, or in thy mouth any sweet sudden savour, other than what thou knowest to be natural, or any heat in thy breast like fire, or any manner of delight in any part of thy body, or if a spirit appear bodily to thee as if it were an angel to comfort thee or teach thee . . . beware in that time or soon after, and wisely consider the stirrings of thy heart ; for if by occasion of the

pleasure and liking thou takest in the said feeling or vision, thou feelest thy heart drawn . . . from the inward desire of virtues and of spiritual knowing and of feeling of God, for to set the sight of thy heart and thy affection, thy delight and thy rest, principally in the said feelings or visions, supposing that to be a part of heavenly joy or angels' bliss . . . then is this feeling very suspicious to come from the enemy; and therefore, though it be never so liking and wonderful, refuse it and assent not thereto."

Walter Hilton (*d.* 1396) head of a house of Augustinian canons at Thurgarton, near Newark, is better known than Rolle, his master. His "Scale (or Ladder) of Perfection" was a favourite devotional book in the Middle Ages. When Thomas More looked down from the Tower windows upon the Carthusians going to their death; it was "The Scale of Perfection" they held in their hands—the very copy still exists. Hilton, moreover, possesses many claims to be considered the author of "The Imitation of Christ," though the case for Thomas à Kempis rests on stronger evidence. It is, however, interesting to dwell on the thought that the book *may* have been written by an English mystic. Hilton's works are more ecclesiastic than Rolle's, more informed with practical sense. They have not the bewildering fervour, the teeming inspiration of the Hermit of Hampole, and so they are nearer the comprehension of ordinary men. His books, however, are full of remarkable beauty, of philosophy and of insight. He can voice a sublime thought in the

simplest language. "For there is no Gift of God that is both the Giver and the Gift, but this Gift of Love." His teaching with regard to the soul shows how far in advance he was of current opinion. The soul, he says, is not inside or outside the body. It is no bodily thing with a spatial existence, but an invisible life. It would be truer to state that the body is inside the soul, than the soul inside the body. Again: "Man is God's image," he says, "not in His bodily shape without, but in his faculties within."

It is the mystical atmosphere of the fourteenth century that we have tried to evolve, because it is in this atmosphere that Dame Juliana breathes. But it is impossible not to make allusion to the practical side of religious thought at this period. Rolle himself, contemplative as he was, admitted that love must manifest in exterior works. "He that says he loves God and will not do in deed that in him is to schew love, tell him that he lies: love will not be idle: it is working some good evermore; if it cease of working, know that it cools and fades away." And we know that Rolle engaged in active preaching and admonition. It is, however, the name of Wyclif that stands out pre-eminent in the history of the religious movement. The mystics were solitary adventurers, exploring the silence of unknown worlds: they were the pioneers who opened the path. "Their service is immeasurable," says Dr Rufus Jones in his "Studies of Mystical Religion," "for they patiently felt out, 'with toil of knees and heart and hands,' the inward way to

God, and taught the finer souls of their age how to dispense with the cumbersome machinery of the mediæval system. But the times were ripe for a prophet statesman, who, with a great spiritual vision, would throw himself into the task of breaking the yoke of bondage, and of guiding the people, the nation, to freedom, peace and God. Wyclif was the prophet statesman, and few men have ever undertaken a harder task, or done it in a more uncompromising and heroic spirit."

Not the great outer world, however, is our background in this study, but the solitary cell, where the bliss of an unseen and all-enveloping love translates itself into Fire, Sweetness and Song.

The Anchoress

In Chaucer's "Prologue to the Legend of Good Women," the poet tells how, of all the flowers in the mead he loves best the red and white flowers that men call daisies in our town. So eagerly did he desire to see the flowers, so young, so fresh of hue, that on the first morning of May he rose before daybreak,

> "With dredful herte and glad devocioun
> For to ben at the resureccioun
> Of this flour, when that it shuld unclose
> Agayn the sonne, that roos as rede as rose : : :
> And doun on knees anon-right I me settë,
> And, as I coude, this fresshë flour I grettë
> Kneling alwey til hit unclosèd was
> Upon the smalë softë swotë gras
> That was with floures swote enbrouded al."

It is to be questioned whether there is any passage in literature that has a greater freshness than this. Its freshness is more than the freshness of a new dawn, the freshness of a new spring ; the soul has become alive to a sudden wonder and miracle, it thrills to the awe that rises out of perception of some divine simplicity. The poet's gift in all ages is to pierce through the white radiance into the golden heart of things ; and Chaucer in this passage sees with a swiftness, an immediacy, that would seem to arise out of some unique vigour and gladness of gaze.

To pass through the white radiance into the golden heart of things is also the gift of the seer. There is a little book, written by a contemporary of Chaucer's, which possesses in like degree to this Prologue, though in different kind, the qualities of vigour and gladness, of sweetness and immediacy. It is not the world of nature that entrances the writer of the "Revelations of Divine Love," but the world within nature, and beyond it ; and to the contemplation of this interior world Dame Juliana of Norwich brings the same simplicity, the same radiant sanity of outlook that characterizes the attitude of Chaucer to exterior things. Like his daisy, her book is young and fresh of hue and has the dew upon it ; its pages hold the stillness and the awe of dawn and of spring. But its dew is the dew of the Spirit, and its dawn was before the foundations of the world.

But little is known about the life of Dame Juliana, Anchoress of Norwich. In the "History of Norfolk,"

by Blomefield (1768), we read in connexion with the old church of St Julian in the parish of Conisford, outlying Norwich : " In the east part of the churchyard stood an anchorage in which an ankeress or recluse dwelt till the Dissolution, when the house was demolished, though the foundations may still be seen (1768). In 1393 Lady Julian, the ankeress here was a strict recluse, and had two servants to attend her in her old age. This woman was in these days esteemed one of the greatest holiness." This church was founded before the Conquest, and service is held there to this day. Its Norman tower of flint rubble is still standing, and traces are still to be found about the foundations of its south-eastern wall of the anchorage occupied by Dame Juliana. King Stephen gave this church to the Benedictine nuns of Carrow, and it is possible that Juliana was educated by these nuns, and joined their order. It was, however, not necessary, though it was usual, for an anchoress to belong to a religious order. This is plainly stated in the *Ancren Riwle*, a rule written, probably by Bishop Poor, for three sisters who were anchoresses in the thirteenth century. When asked to what order they belong, the Bishop bids these ladies reply, to the Order of St James, " because he says what religion is, and what right order ' to keep himself pure and unstained from the world ' . . . herein is religion, and not in the wide hood, nor in the black, nor in the white, nor in the gray cowl."

In the fourteenth century there were numerous

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CHURCH OF ST. JULIAN, NORWICH

Showing site of Dame Juliana's Anchorage, and window (marked with a cross) which opened from her cell into the church

anchorages in England, some of them set in the open country, many of them built against the walls of a church, or actually within the church itself. From the detailed directions given in the *Ancren Riwle* it is not difficult to reconstruct the external life of an anchoress about this time. The anchoress is to take three vows only—the vows of obedience, chastity, and constancy to her abode. She is to live upon alms, as frugally as she can, and her two meals a day are to be eaten in silence. She is not to eat flesh or lard except in great sickness ; nevertheless, the writer of the *Ancren Riwle* is strongly opposed to strict penances. "Nevertheless, dear sisters," he writes, "your meat and your drink have seemed to me less than I would have it. Fast no day upon bread and water, except ye have leave." The following passage is an interesting one, as written by an ecclesiastic of moderate temper :—

"Wear no iron, nor haircloth, nor hedgehog-skin ; and do not beat yourselves therewith, nor with a scourge of leather thongs, nor leaded ; and do not with holly nor with briars cause yourselves to bleed without leave of your confessor ; and do not at one time use too many flagellations."

He adds : "If ye would dispense with wimples, have warm caps, and over them black veils." Minute directions are given on such matters as hair-cutting : "Ye shall have your hair cut four times a year to disburden your head," and we see how

universal was the mediæval practice of letting blood, since in the same breath the anchoresses are told to be let blood as oft (as four times a year) or oftener if it is necessary. Also—and this is a permission pleasing to modern ears—the anchoresses are allowed to wash themselves as often as they please.

The anchoress may have two maidens to serve her, one who stays always at home, and the other who goes out to procure food. With regard to pets the Bishop writes: "Ye shall not possess any beast; my dear sisters, except only a cat." The room of an anchoress is to have three windows, one opening to the church, one to the room where the maidens are, and one to the outer world: through this last window the anchoress may give counsel to those who come to her for it. "My dear sisters, love your windows as little as possible," writes the Bishop; and he compares a "peering anchoress, who is always thrusting her head outward," to "an untamed bird in a cage." The windows are to be small, and they are to be curtained with a curtain of double cloth, black, having a white cross upon it.

Minute directions are given as to the devotions of the recluses, and in addition to these they are bidden to shape and sew and mend Church vestments, and poor people's clothes, and help to clothe themselves and their domestics.

From these particulars we can form some idea of the exterior life of an anchoress in the fourteenth century. There are, however, but few documents to indicate her interior life; and of these "The

Revelations of Divine Love" is one of the most searching.

The original manuscript, written in mixed East Anglian and Northern dialects, is lost, but two manuscript copies are in existence: one in Paris, made in the sixteenth century, and one in the British Museum, of seventeenth-century date. The earliest printed copy was prepared by the Benedictine, Serenus de Cressy, and appeared in 1670, and a modern version has recently been made by Miss Grace Warrack and published by Messrs Methuen.

The fourteenth century is of so motley a character, and produced children of so divers a type, that it is a little difficult to say what heredity Dame Juliana's work can claim from her time. The "Revelations" have the serene joy which at that epoch characterized English mysticism, and in the case of Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole, changed thought into song, and the mind into full sweet sound; and the zest and the gladness with which Chaucer meets ordinary everyday life are here turned with exquisite familiarity to spiritual things: "For the most fulness of joy that we shall have, as to my sight, is the marvellous courtesy and homeliness of our Father, that is our Maker, in our Lord Jesus Christ that is our Brother and our Saviour."

But the fourteenth century was also a century of plague and slaughter, of starvation and misery. The Black Death swept over Europe; famine and fear stalked through village and town; war, with its hideous pack of mercenaries in full cry, rushed

over the face of the Continent, destroying the harvest fields, and draining away the resources of existence. Of these dark events of history, there is no shadow in Dame Juliana's book. Still more striking, we find no echo in her work of the bitter controversies that were rending Holy Church at that time. The corruption of the priesthood was widespread; even the genial Chaucer, despite his kindly outlook upon men and things, has praise for but one churchman in his gallery of ecclesiastical portraits, and that is the parish Priest. His Monk is a self-indulgent lover of pleasure—of the hunt and of the table; his Pardoner with pardons hot from Rome is no better than a quack seller of valueless specifics; his Friar has no higher ambition than to rake in money for his order; the virtues of his Prioress consist in dainty manners at table and an easy sentimentality. The faults and failings which gave Chaucer opportunity for his sly humour, worked in a nature like William Langland's to gall, and in a nature like John Wyclif's to fire. It was not for the author of "Piers Plowman," stalking in his black gown along the Strand, to gaze on the pomps and evils that were sapping the Church with an easy indifference; he dwelt too close to misery, and bitterness was in his heart, and sharp invective rose to his lips. In Wyclif's ardent soul the sight of wrongs and shames and injustices innumerable, lighted the burning zeal of the reformer. There can indeed have been few centuries that witnessed so wide a severance between the ideals of the Church,

and the practice of its rulers. But there is no word of criticism in Dame Juliana's book—no indication even that she was aware of the depths of degradation to which the clergy had fallen. The problems of the world, whether political or ecclesiastical, remain outside her cell. It is, however, more surprising to find that she is in no greater degree perturbed by the problems of the enclosed life. We have in her book no discussions on asceticisms or disciplines; no anguished backslidings; no frantic avoidance of the pitfalls of spiritual pride; no "hoarse, inarticulate cries" of the eagle baffled in its attempt on the sun; no terrible experiences of outer darkness. The ways of torture that have to be trodden by so many earnest seekers after God are unknown to Dame Juliana's feet. The doctrines of Grace and Election do not perplex her; the fear of eternal damnation does not disturb her. She writes: "To me was shewed no harder hell than sin." There is no wrath of God and no forgiveness of God in her scheme of salvation: "For our soul is so fully oned to God of His own goodness that between God and our soul may be right naught."

"I saw soothfastly that our Lord was never wroth, nor ever shall be. For He is God: Good, Life, Truth, Love, Peace; His Clarity and His Unity suffer Him not to be wroth. For I saw truly that it is against the property of His Might to be wroth, and against the property of His Wisdom, and against the property of His Goodness."

This is the keystone of Dame Juliana's faith: *Our soul is oned to Him, unchangeable Goodness, and between God and our soul is neither wrath nor forgiveness in His sight.*

Out of this faith arises fulness of joy—gladness, merriness, bliss—these words occur and recur in her book, making spiritual sunshine. We are to be glad and merry in love; and when our courteous Lord shows Himself to the soul, it is well merrily and with glad cheer and with friendly welcoming: and they are oned in bliss. Through this relationship, so intimate and so tender, Dame Juliana has vision of the love that was for us, even before we were made:

"And I saw full surely that ere God made us He loved us; which love was never slackened, nor ever shall be. . . . In our making we had beginning; but the love wherein He made us was in Him from without beginning: in which love we have our beginning."

And now to look more particularly at the definite revelations on which Dame Juliana's faith and teaching are based. These came to her, a simple creature, unlettered (as she writes), the year of our Lord 1373, on the thirteenth day of May, after seven days of mortal sickness. She saw fifteen consecutive visions or "shewings" between the hours of four and nine in the morning, and one more "shewing" on the evening of the next day. Here are her own words:

"And when I was thirty years old and a half, God sent me a bodily sickness, in which I lay three days and three nights. . . . I weened oftentimes to have passed, and so weened they that were with me. . . . Thus I dured till day, and by then my body was dead from the middle downwards, as to my feeling. Then was I minded to be set upright, backward leaning, with help—for to have more freedom of my heart to be at God's will, and thinking on God while my life would last.

"My curate was sent for me to be at my ending, and by that time when he came I had set my eyes, and might not speak. He set the cross before my face and said: *I have brought thee the Image of thy Maker and Saviour: look thereupon and comfort thee therewith.* . . . After this the upper part of my body began to die, so far forth that scarcely I had any feeling; with shortness of breath. And then I weened in sooth to have passed.

"And in this moment suddenly all my pain was taken from me and I was as whole (and specially in the upper part of my body) as ever I was afore."

Then followed the vision: the crucifix was being held before her eyes, and she "saw the red blood trickle down from under the garland hot and freshly and right plenteously, as it were in the time of His Passion when the Garland of Thorns was pressed on His Blessed Head, who was both God and man, the same that suffered thus for me."

In studying the lives of Christian mystics we are

constantly driven to wonder how prolonged contemplation of physical pain could have awakened in many minds high spiritual insight and spiritual intuition. It is easy to see how the infliction of pain upon oneself may have cultivated qualities of will and of endurance : it is more difficult to realize the spiritual gain in the ceaseless fixing of the thought upon physical suffering. It has to be remembered, however, that the mediæval attitude towards pain differed radically from our modern attitude. Physical pain is to us an evil to be avoided ; to the mediæval mind it was a road that led in the Saviour's footsteps —a glory to be coveted. To dwell upon details of physical suffering is to us sign of a morbid craving after sensationalism ; but to the mystic of the Middle Ages, suffering was so fraught with sacred association that it became spiritualized, deified, symbol for supreme sacrifice and eternal love.

Although Dame Juliana does not possess that amazing range of self-analysis that enabled St Teresa to describe her soul experiences with almost scientific precision, yet the anchoress of Norwich is able to distinguish with great clearness the different channels through which she receives communication. The revelation was derived, she writes, by three ways: "That is to say, by bodily sight, and by word formed in mine understanding, and by spiritual sight." By bodily sight she had vision of Christ's Passion ; by spiritual sight she had vision of its meaning, and of the deeper mysteries of the faith. And on the sole occasion when she doubts the reality of the vision

seen by bodily sight, it is confirmed by spiritual sight. This happened after the first fifteen "shewings," when sickness was upon her again:

"Then came a religious person to me and asked me how I fared. I said I had raved to-day. *The Cross that stood afore my face methought it bled fast.* And with this the person that I had spoke to waxed all sober and marvelled. . . . And when I saw that he took it earnestly and with so great reverence, I wept, full greatly ashamed, and would have been shriven; but at that time I could tell it no priest for I thought: *How should a priest believe me? I believe not our Lord God.*

"Then the Lord Jesus of His mercy . . . shewed it (the Revelation) all again *within in my soul* with more fulness, with the blessed light of His precious love: saying these words full mightily and full meekly: *Wit it now well: it was no raving that thou sawest this day.*"

Her vision of Christ's passion that she saw with her bodily sight is marked by an extraordinary vividness of colour and detail.

"The great drops of blood fell down from under the garland like pellets, seeming as if it had come out of the veins; and in coming out they were brown-red, for the blood was full thick; and in the spreading abroad they were bright-red; and when they came to the brows they vanished . . . the plenteousness

is like the drops of water that fall off the eaves after a great shower of rain, that fall so thick that no man may number them with bodily wit; and for the roundness, they were like the scale of herring, in spreading on the forehead. . . ."

Near the time of Christ's dying she writes: "I saw His face as it were dry and bloodless with pale dying. And later, more pale, dead, languoring; and then turned more dead unto blue; and then more brown-blue."

These successive features of a wholly physical anguish are so irradiated by the spirit in which they are seen that they become to the seer a sight "full sweet and marvellous to behold, peaceful, restful, sure and delectable." Juliana's bodily eyes witness Christ's agony—to her spiritual understanding is revealed at the same time His homely loving:

"I saw that He is to us everything that is good and comfortable for us: He is our clothing that for love wrappeth us, claspeth us, and all encloseth us for tender love, that He may never leave us. . . . Then said our good Lord Jesus Christ: *Art thou well pleased that I suffered for thee?* I said: *Yea, good Lord, I thank Thee; yea, good Lord, blessed mayst Thou be.*"

As we read of these visions of Christ's passion we are borne in imagination into the cell of the anchoress; we see the light shining through the white cross of the curtain, and hear the chanting coming

through the window opening into the church. We are back in mediæval times, when the intense and prolonged contemplation of Christ's wounds produced the physical stigmata on the bodies of his adorers. We have passed into a world of gladness and simplicity, where all the relationships between the soul and God are marked by homeliness and courtesy and tender love.

But Juliana's revelations have aspects that do not belong to any time or nation. There are visions among the sixteen "shewings"—visions opened to spiritual sight—that may give her rank among the great seers of divine things. She has climbed the heights of mystical thought, she has looked out to far spiritual horizons. With swift directness, in all simplicity, she tells of the great mysteries:

"And after this I saw God in a Point—that is to say, in mine understanding—by which sight I saw that He is in all things. . . . He is the Mid-point of all thing. . . . And all this shewed He full blissfully, signifying thus: *See! I am God: see! I am in all thing: see! I do all thing: see! I lift never Mine hands off My works, nor never shall, without end: see! I lead all thing to the end I ordained it to from without beginning, by the same Might, Wisdom and Love whereby I made it. How should anything be amiss?*"

It was not only through direct revelation, either bodily or spiritual, as she tells us, that Dame Juliana gained insight into spiritual truth. For years

after the sixteen visions had been vouchsafed her she brooded over their ultimate meaning, with the result that she takes a clear stand on many of the most vexed questions of philosophy and metaphysics. Thus she holds the Neo-Platonic view that in every soul that shall be saved is a godly will that never assented to sin, nor ever shall; because every soul has absolute unity of substance with God—is, in fact, to quote the phraseology of a certain school of mystics, a spark from the divine fire. Eckhart summarized this doctrine when he said that the eye with which he saw God, was the same as the eye with which God saw him; but it is to be doubted whether any exponent has set forth this view with greater clearness than Dame Juliana of Norwich:

"When God should make man's body He took the clay of earth, which is matter mingled and gathered of all bodily things; and thereof He made man's body. But to the making of man's soul He took right nought, but made it. And thus is the Nature-made rightfully oned to the Maker, which is substantial Maker not made—that is, God. . . . Our soul is *made* to be God's dwelling-place; and the dwelling-place of the soul is God, Which is *unmade*. And high understanding it is, inwardly to see and know that God, which is our Maker, dwelleth in our soul; and an higher understanding it is to see and know that our soul, that is made, dwelleth in God's Substance; of which Substance, God, we are that we are."

Certain schools of theologians have vigorously combated the doctrine of Unity of Substance, in fear lest the creature should become intoxicated with spiritual pride, and blasphemously claim equality with the Godhead. But presumption was ever far from Juliana's thought. She who wrote that God is nearer to us than our own soul ("for our soul is so deep grounded in God and so endlessly treasured, that we may not come to the knowing thereof till we have first knowing of God"), has yet given us a picture of the majesty of the Creator and the dependence of the creature almost unequalled in imaginative insight and beauty:

"Also in this He shewed me a little thing, the quantity of an hazel nut, in the palm of my hand; and it was round as a ball. I looked thereupon with eye of my understanding, and thought: *What may this be?* And it was answered generally thus: *It is all that is made.* I marvelled how it might last, for methought it might suddenly have fallen to naught for little[ness]. And I was answered in my understanding: *It lasteth, and ever shall last, for that God loveth it.* And so All-thing hath the being by the love of God.

"In this Little Thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it, the second is that God loveth it, the third, that God keepeth it."

Not only imaginative insight and beauty and tenderness mark this description, but in her vision of All-thing as a ball, Juliana seems to have had fore-

sight of scientific truth ; just as in her vision of God as a Point she has touched the height of spiritual mathematics.

It will be asked what attitude Juliana took to the problem that has baffled the thinkers of all time—the problem of evil, the problem of sin. To the religious mind there are four principal ways of meeting this problem. The first way is the assumption of a Dark Angel, or Principle of Evil, warring ever with God or Good. The second way is the denial of the existence of evil and sin as realities in themselves. The third way is the regarding of evil and sin as the necessary outcome of wrongs committed in past lives—the inevitable effects of past causes. This involves a belief in reincarnation. The fourth way is the admission that this problem is too hard for us to meet unaided—that it is beyond our human comprehension. This is the way taken by Juliana. It has been revealed to her that *all shall be well and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well* ; but brooding over this, she remembers that it is a point of faith that many shall be condemned, as angels that fell out of heaven for pride, and heathen men, and men that have received Christendom, and liveth un-Christian life—

" All these shall be condemned to hell without end as Holy Church teacheth me to believe. And all this [so] standing, methought it was impossible that all manner of things should be well, as our Lord shewed at the same time.

"And as to this I had no other answer in shewing of our Lord God but this: *That which is impossible to thee is not impossible to Me: I shall save my word in all things and shall make all things well.*"

She makes allusion again to a "part of truth" that "is hid and shut up from us." "One part of truth is our Saviour and our salvation. This blessed part is open and clear and fair and light and plenteous —for all mankind that is of good will, and shall be, is comprehended in this part." But the second— "all that part beside our salvation"—is our Lord's privy counsel, and it belongeth to His servant, for obedience and reverence, not to learn wholly His meaning. This recalls the "Silence of Buddha"—his refusal to give his disciples any teaching except that directly necessary for the following of the Path. When questioned on ultimates he remained silent. But though Dame Juliana admits divine secrecies beyond the comprehension of man, her book, as we have seen, does not fear to deal with high mysteries. And in no unfaltering words does she give us the final meaning of all:

"And from that time it was shewed I desired oftentimes to learn what was our Lord's meaning. And fifteen years after, and more, I was answered in ghostly understanding, saying thus: *Wouldst thou learn thy Lord's meaning in this thing? Learn it well: Love was His meaning. Who shewed it thee? Love. What shewed He thee? Love. Wherefore*

shewed it He? For Love. Hold thee therein and thou shalt learn and know more in the same. But thou shalt never know nor learn therein other thing without end."

There is a story told in the Shin Shu books how the Japanese monk Shinran (born 1173) was met by a young girl, who gave to him a crystal burning-glass, saying: "Take this and keep it. It has the power to collect the sun's rays and focus them upon one point, on which it shines with burning heat. Do the same for religion. Collect and focus into one point the whole system of the faith, and let that one point be made burning and bright, so that it may kindle into flames even the simplest and most ignorant soul." [1]

The "Revelations of Divine Love" may be accounted such a burning-crystal. The book focuses the faith into one point—the oneing of the soul to God—and makes that one point burning with love and bright with joy. All differences are merged into one ultimate unity; all colours are blent again into their anterior whiteness. And so is the soul kindled into flame.

[1] Lloyd: "Shinran and his Work."

ST CATHERINE OF SIENA

In the Cell of Self-Knowledge

TO write of Catherine of Siena one should write in Blood and Fire. No symbol less ardent than Fire can portray her burning spirit of devotion ever flaming upward yet warming and lighting friends and neighbours in its glow; no symbol less vital than Blood can suggest that unquenchable strength of will and character which moulded kings and popes and changed the very course of history.

As Blood and as Fire, the great realities shaped themselves before her soul—Fire as truth, and Blood as love. "O abyss, O eternal Godhead, O deep sea," she writes, "thou art fire that ever burnest and art not consumed; thou art fire that consumest all self-love in the soul by thy heat; thou art fire that destroyest all coldness; thou dost illumine, and by thy light thou hast made us know thy truth." As Fire stands a symbol for the eternal Godhead, so Blood stands symbol for the supreme love of God-and-Man nailed on the cross. All the passion and tenderness of sacrifice, all the selflessness of devotion, Catherine puts into the symbol of Blood, and the image, filled with intensity of meaning, is found abundantly in her life and letters.

Intensity is the keynote of her nature. As a

mystic, intensity of desire enabled her to scale unknown heights of spiritual experience ; as a woman, intensity of love stimulated her untiring charity ; as a politician, intensity of purpose overcame the most stubborn obstacles. It is only diffidently, haltingly, reverently that we venture to analyse a character so great in its manysidedness. In all her bewildering spiritual experience, amid the complex intricacies of politics, her mind always retained perfect equilibrium ; piercing insight was united with sound common-sense, devotion to God with the largest human tenderness. In every circumstance of daily life she showed herself heroic. The courage with which she faced principalities and powers, and braved a murderous rabble bent on her death, was less than the courage with which she bore a life of excruciating physical torment, and disappointments more bitter in the frustration of her dearest hopes. Her countenance, we read, was always calm and gay, and she brought her message with so winning a sweetness of personality that none who heard her could resist. " At her voice, nay, only looking upon her, hearts were changed."

From start to finish her life is full of wonder and beauty. To us of this age, its most striking, its most puzzling feature lies in the fact that the manifold activities of mind, of body and of soul had for preparation years of withdrawal and asceticism. The robust girl who, as her mother tells us, was able to carry a horseload up two flights of stairs to the attic and not feel the weight, emerged at the age of seven-

teen from the cell in which she had enclosed herself, a frail, emaciated woman who lived on a few crumbs and herbs; who did practically without sleep, and who was nevertheless capable of continuous and arduous exertion of body; who was possessed of a mind vigorous and penetrating, of unflinching moral courage and the sanest wisdom.

For Catherine's life and experiences, contemporary material is abundant. Her confessor, Brother Raymund of Capua, Master-General of the Dominicans, to whom she was deeply attached, has left a full biography, the "Vita" or "Legenda." This was finished in 1395, fifteen years after the saint's death. We have also vivid descriptions set down by her secretaries and disciples. We have the evidence collected between 1411 and 1413 from her surviving followers when they were accused of celebrating her Feast before she had been canonized by the Church. Above all, three hundred and seventy-three of her own letters have come down to us, together with her mystical treatise, the "Dialogue," dictated while she was in a state of trance. Mr Edmund Gardner's modern Life of the saint is a deeply interesting and sympathetic study.

Catherine was born on 25th March 1347 into a world of unrest and trouble. Not only were nations at war against nations, and cities against cities, but the very cities themselves were a prey to contending factions. This was especially evident in the Italian republics. Dante, writing some decades before the birth of Catherine, compares Florence to

a sick man tossing on his couch, and vainly seeking ease in a change of position. In Siena, Catherine's birthplace, there had been a hundred years' strife between the nobles and the people, between the lesser crafts and the greater crafts, the fat and the lean, *popolo grasso* and *popolo magro*. Since 1305 the popes had been at Avignon. They ruled their vast possessions in Italy by means of rapacious papal legates, whose cruelties and extortions drove the people to rebellion. Mercenaries roamed the unhappy country, fighting now for pope, now for king, now for people, extorting what spoil they pleased. This condition of things gave rise to problems of extreme difficulty with which Catherine was called upon to deal in her active exterior life—uprisings and schisms which caused her anguish almost past our comprehension. But before touching on these, let us tell what we may of Catherine's early life.

Siena stands to-day on its three hills, little changed from mediæval times. Against the radiant Italian sky, turret of red brick and campanile of silver stone rise into the clear air. Siena is still girded with walls and bastions, and her gates still retain their ancient names. One hill is crowned by the great unfinished Gothic cathedral ; and one by the austere red-brick church of St Dominic. From a distance this church draws the eyes of all lovers of Catherine. Above its roof she saw as a child the vision that shaped her destiny ; for twenty years its floors were trodden by her almost daily ; within its walls she had ecstasies and visions. Below St Dominic stretched the quarters

of the smaller tradesmen, and half-way up a steep street, inhabited of old by dyers and tanners, stands to this day, transfigured but not materially altered, the house in which Catherine was born and in which her life was passed. So Swinburne writes :

> " And the house midway hanging see
> That saw Saint Catherine bodily,
> Felt on its floors her sweet feet move
> And the live light of fiery love
> Burn from her beautiful, strange face."

Her father, Jacomo di Benincasa, was a dyer by trade ; a man of gentle manners, pious and loving. During the time when the lesser crafts had gained political ascendancy in the little republic, he had acted as chief magistrate, but the balance of power was continually shifting, and at a later date Catherine's brothers were in danger of their lives from an opposite faction. Catherine was the twenty-fourth child of her mother Lapa, and from her baby years was the delight of the whole neighbourhood. They gave her the name of *Euphrosyne*, Joy, and she, who loved children so tenderly, was as a child most tenderly loved. But, we read, she was serious even in her play. We see the tiny golden-haired baby going on her knees up the stairs of the house, saying, " Hail, Mary ! " at every step, as she had watched the pious pilgrims doing. We imagine her listening with grave eyes to the stories told by the friars and priests who frequented the house. It is a little difficult for us to realize the overwhelming

part played by the Church in mediæval life. The streets were thronged with men and women clad in her livery who had taken her vows ; the vast churches, so frequented, so familiar, were the threshold to great mysteries. The high crucifix, the image of the Virgin, the pictured saints, filled the imagination with concrete details. It is at once evident that transcendental experiences, if they are to reach normal consciousness, must make use of whatever material the brain supplies. So in the raiment of the Church, the visions of Catherine clothed themselves. When only six years old, returning from a visit to her married sister, the child Catherine saw in the sunset sky above St Dominic, Jesus enthroned, clad in pontifical robes and wearing the tiara, attended by Peter, Paul and John. Jesus smiled and raised two fingers to bless the little child, and she stood absorbed in the glory until her brother touched her arm and called her back to the things of this world. Having reached home, we read in the "Miracoli," a collection of legends by an unknown author, she said nothing to father or mother of what she had seen ; but from that day there grew up in her a certain carefulness of soul, a remorse of conscience, and fear of committing sin, as far as was possible to one of her age.

The imagination of the child had been captured by the stories of those desert saints who dwelt in the wilderness alone with God. Indeed, there was a settlement of hermits in the large oak forest of Lecceto, only three miles from Siena. One day,

when Catherine was no more than seven, she set out to seek a place where she might lead the solitary life. She took with her a loaf of bread and passed through the city gates into a land where she had never been before. Soon, to her great joy, she found a little cave, and feeling that God had guided her feet she went in and knelt down and prayed. But the hours went by, and perhaps her heart failed her a little, and she thought that her parents might miss her and sorrow for her, and then the legend tells that God sent a little cloud on which she was wafted safely home.

When Catherine was twelve years old, her parents felt that the time had arrived for them to consider her marriage. In vain, however, her mother implored her to wear prettier clothes, and to dye and dress her hair as the fashion ordained. For love of her married sister, Bonaventura, Catherine modified slightly the soberness of her dress—a compliance which all her life she repented. A few years later her sister died. Catherine remained firm in her purpose to take no husband, and the prayers of her parents had no power to move her. At last they called to their aid a friar preacher, Brother Thomas, a relative of the family and her first confessor. "If your purpose is serious, my daughter," he said to her, "prove it by cutting off your hair." Catherine's hair was her greatest beauty, abundant and golden-brown in colour. Without a moment's hesitation she seized a pair of scissors, and the locks fell to the ground. But

though the friar took this as a sign that she had indeed chosen the higher life, her parents regarded it as an act of rebellion against themselves. They were determined that she should be brought to obedience, and that her spirit of defiance should be broken. They took from her her own little room, and made her share one with her brother. They dismissed the kitchen-maid, so that Catherine should have all the heavy work of the house to do. She bore all this with a ready sweetness, with a gaiety and a cheerfulness that must in the end have broken down the most stubborn opposition. One day Jacomo, happening to enter the bedroom which Catherine shared with her brother, saw the girl on her knees, praying, and hovering over her head a white dove. Convinced by this sign, he offered no further barrier to his daughter's will. At fourteen she was given leave to dispose her life as she wished.

She had taken no vows ; she was under no rule or direction. What she did was accomplished by her sole will. She begged for some little place which she might have to herself, and her father gave her a room under the house. The cell is still to be seen, and the remains of the brick steps that led to the one small window. The lower step was often her only pillow. " Here no tongue could narrate," writes Raymund in the " Legenda," " with what rigour of penitence she afflicted her body, with what eagerness of love she sought the countenance of her Spouse. In this little chamber were renewed the

olden-time works of the holy fathers of Egypt, and all the more wondrously, inasmuch as they were done in her father's house, without any human teaching, example or guidance."

During this time—the exact date is uncertain—Catherine was allowed to join the Third Order of St Dominic, the Sisters of Penance, known familiarly in Siena as the *Mantellate*, by reason of the black mantle (of humanity) they wore over the white habit (of innocence). The *Mantellate* were women of mature age, most of them widows, banded together for good works. They lived at home, and went about freely ; they took no vows whatsoever, either of chastity, poverty or obedience. At first Lapa opposed her daughter's desire, but at last, induced by Catherine's serious illness, she approached the sisters. They hesitated to admit one so young into their order, lest her youth and charm should work scandal ; but she was at this time so disfigured by illness that the sisters who visited her were reassured on this point. They were so touched and edified by her conversation that they recommended her admission into the order. With deep rejoicing she received the mantle, which was always precious to her. She mended and patched it with her own hands, and parted with it only once, to give it to a beggar. It was, however, afterwards restored to her.

For three years—from the age of fourteen to the age of seventeen—Catherine dwelt in her cell in practical isolation. She left it only to go to church ;

she spoke with no man except her confessor. Bare boards served as her bed by night and her bench by day. The window and door of her cell were kept closed, and candles burned before the image of the Virgin and the crucifix. She practised a life of extreme austerity. She accustomed herself to live on a little bread and a few raw herbs, and in after life the taking of any food at all became a severe torture; for long weeks together she is known to have subsisted only on the Sacrament, administered daily. The austerity that cost her most was the overcoming of the desire for sleep. She trained herself to do with only two hours' sleep, and that every two nights. She watched and prayed while the friars of St Dominic slept, so that prayer might arise continuously before God's throne. Sorely Lapa grieved over the harsh usage her beloved daughter inflicted upon herself; and very gently Catherine turned the mother's tender devices into occasions for even more vigorous penance.

Such a way of life is so alien to modern practice and ideal that the world to-day is very far from accepting it with the simple and heartwhole admiration accorded by Catherine's biographer, Brother Raymund. And yet, though we may take exception to the method, there are few of us who will dispute Catherine's aim, which, in a word, was the purification of body, mind and soul. Impurities of desire, impurities of thought, clog the channel between us and the divine, and self-knowledge, as she understood it, is the first stage in the journey to God.

So Catherine writes in her "Dialogue"—it is the Eternal Father who is speaking:

"Wherefore I reply that this is the way, if thou wilt arrive at a perfect knowledge and enjoyment of Me, the Eternal Father, that thou wilt never go outside the knowledge of thyself. . . . In self-knowledge, then, thou wilt humble thyself, seeing that in thyself thou dost not even exist; for thy very being, as thou wilt learn, is derived from Me, since I have loved both thee and others before you were in existence."

Self-knowledge, the knowledge of the true self, is thus the knowledge of a new self, the spiritual self. The finding of this self is imaged by many under the symbol of New Birth, and Catherine compares the birth of the spiritual self within each of us to the birth of Jesus in the stable. She is here following the method of St Paul, who gives to the whole life of Jesus a cosmic interpretation—His birth, baptism, crucifixion and resurrection being the figure of the destiny of every soul. We quote from the "Dialogue":

"Thou dost see"—again the Eternal Father is speaking—"this sweet and loving Word born in a stable, while Mary was journeying; to show to you, who are travellers, that you must ever be born again in the stable of knowledge of yourselves, where you will find Him born by grace within your souls."

The Old Masters seem to have been familiar with the symbolism which identifies the earthly nature with a cell or cave, wherein the spirit is born. Very constantly they represent the Nativity in rocky hollows, or at least introduce some cave-like features into the stable. It is not merely a historical scene they are painting, nor one great spiritual moment in the world's story, but the symbol of a universal truth of daily occurrence.

Self-knowledge, the spiritual self, is reached by a process of purgation. But in all her writings and teachings Catherine is most careful to inculcate moderation and discretion in the use of penance. She is continually writing to her friends begging and commanding them not to fast, even on the days ordained by Holy Church, if they do not feel strong enough. "If the body is weak," she writes to Sister Daniella of Orvieto, "flesh must be eaten; if once a day is not enough, then four times. This discretion demands. Therefore it insists that penance be treated as a means and not as a chief desire. Dost thou know why it must not be chief? That the soul may not serve God with a thing that is finite, and that may be taken from it; but with holy desire, which is infinite, through its union with the infinite desire of God; and with the virtues which neither devil nor fellow-creature nor weakness can take from us, unless we choose."

The teaching of the "Dialogue" is even more emphatic. "Often, indeed, if the soul performs not her penance with discretion—that is to say, if

her affection be placed principally in the penance she has undertaken—her perfection will be impeded. . . . She should place her principal affection in virtue rather than in penance. . . . When thou wert desirous of doing great penance for My sake, asking, 'What can I do to endure suffering for Thee, O Lord?' I replied to thee, speaking in thy mind: 'I take delight in few words and many works.'"

If in Catherine's own case, when she was little more than a child, her burning love for God outran all reason, we do not feel ourselves in any position to criticize. Even on the human side we have to admit that she succeeded in bringing the body into absolute subjection to the will, that she was able to overcome all physical repugnances, so that loving service to loathsome disease was joyfully given, and that her own supreme self-conquest endued her with unlimited power to guide and control others.

Her physical health suffered; her activities were not impaired, but she endured agonies of pain and died early. Extremes of asceticism no doubt contributed to this result, but we must also take into account the conflicts and ecstasies too shattering for flesh to bear. It has, however, been well pointed out that the mystical life is not the only life that involves possible danger to health and well-being. The soldier, the hospital nurse, the explorer, the aviator—all these gladly face the risks of their calling. "The fact of ill-health," says Baron von Hügel, "simply raises the question of the serious value of the mystical life." If it has serious value,

he concludes, then we must accept any penalties it entails. And it must be remembered that in many cases the sense of the inflowing of the divine life has co-ordinated the whole being, has brought harmony and peace and health. But Catherine of Siena was afire with divine love, and in it her frail body was consumed.

Before, however, Catherine reached the consummation, she had one more terrible fight to wage against the flesh.

In the histories that have come down to us of mystical purification, there is a moment when desire summons all its scattered forces for one last assault. The kingdoms of the world, with which the devil tempted Jesus, the glories and beauties of material life, every delicate bait to lure the starved senses—all these assemble to bar the struggling soul at this stage of its progress. They are symbolized in various legends under various shapes ; visioned as demons wooing with exquisite softness of physical form and beauty, with gleaming raiments, with rich and steaming meats ; or as fiends, obscene and impure, assailing with continual torment. From such terrible visions Catherine at one period could find no rest. In vain she battled against the horror, in vain she dragged herself from the cell to the church, and lay prostrate on the stones. Only by a joyous acceptance of suffering did she at length win to peace. "'I have chosen suffering for my consolation and will gladly bear these and all other torments in the name of the Saviour, for as

long as shall please His Majesty.' Then all that assemblage of demons departed in confusion, and a great light appeared that illumined all the room, and in the light the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, nailed to the cross and stained with blood, and from the cross he called the holy virgin, saying: 'My daughter Catherine, seest thou how much I have suffered for thee? Let it not then be hard to thee to endure for Me. . . .' But she, imitating Antony, said: 'And where wast Thou, my Lord, whilst my heart was tormented with so much foulness?' To which the Lord answered: 'I was in thy heart!'"

It is very difficult for us to realize, to understand, to interpret Catherine's mystical experiences, for even to those of her own time, to those most dear to her, she was unable to tell them with a tongue of flesh. "Were I to try and express to you what I saw," she says to Raymund, "I should reproach myself as guilty of vain words: it seems to me that I should blaspheme God and dishonour Him by my language. The distance is so vast between what my spirit contemplated, when ravished in God, and everything I could describe to you, that I feel I should be deceiving you in speaking of these things." The accounts we have are thus only "pearls dipped in mud," to use another of Catherine's phrases—a light hidden with material covering, clothed in the temporary substance of the brain. Catherine, we read, smelt the fragrance of the flowers of Paradise, and was visited by heavenly presences. Christ

Himself came to her and the words he spoke were the foundation stone of all her life. "Knowest thou, O daughter, who thou art, and who I am? Thou art she who art naught, and I am He who am. If thou hast this knowledge in thy soul, the enemy will never be able to deceive thee, and thou wilt escape from all his snares."

As we plunge deeper and deeper into mystical experience, language evolved for utilitarian purposes becomes more and more inadequate. Images drawn from the spheres of material life are the only ones available; they are of necessity but coarse devices to indicate clumsily that which is beyond expression. The mystic life has its supreme consummation in the union of the soul with God. After the stage of Purgation is passed, after the stage of Illumination, the soul reaches an attainment beyond all thought, and knows with a certitude that has no words that it has become one with the divine. How is this to be said? In earthly life there is no union so close and so tender as the marriage of lover and beloved. We are driven, therefore, to make use of this symbol, and to enlarge it, transfigure it, glorify it, until it becomes the Spiritual Marriage, the Mystic Espousal wherein creature and Creator are made one.

The central innermost experience symbolized by the Spiritual Marriage remains the same throughout the ages; only the raiment of mind-stuff that clothes it varies with different periods. The Spiritual Marriage of Catherine has taken upon itself much of the concrete detail of her time, while the Spiritual

Marriage of Teresa is almost without externalities. We tell the story as it is told in the "Legenda."

"As Lent drew near, on the last day of Carnival, Catherine shut herself up in her cell, and sought by prayer and fasting to make reparation for the offences committed by the thoughtless crowds who passed her door. Her Lord appeared to her, and said: 'Because thou hast forsaken all the vanities of the world, and set thy love upon Me, and because, for My sake thou hast chosen rather to afflict thy body with fasting than to eat flesh with others . . . therefore I am determined this day to keep a solemn feast with thee, and with great joy and pomp to espouse thy soul to Me in faith.' As He was yet speaking there appeared in the same place the most glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of God, the beloved disciple St John the Evangelist, St Paul the Apostle and the great Patriarch and Founder of her order, St Dominic; and after these came the kingly Poet and Prophet with a musical psalter in his hand. Then our Blessed Lady came to her and took her by the hand, which she held towards her Divine Son, and besought Him that he would vouchsafe to espouse her to Him in good faith. To which he consented with a very sweet and lovely countenance, and taking out a ring that was set about with four precious pearls, and had in the other part a marvellous rich diamond, he put the same on the finger of her right hand, saying thus: 'Behold, I here espouse thee to Me, thy Maker and Saviour, in faith which shall continue in thee from this time forward

evermore unchanged, until the time shall come of a blissful consummation in the joys of heaven. Now then, act courageously ; thou art armed with faith, and shalt triumph over all thine enemies.'" Then the vision disappeared.

It is well to keep in mind the central fact of Union; since this links Catherine's Spiritual Marriage with universal mystical experience. All experience has, however, to express itself through the medium of its time.

The symbol of the Spiritual Marriage is one capable of dangerous use ; over-sensuous imagery has too often contaminated its purity, and a strain of earthly passion has mingled with the divine. But in Catherine's vision, the Bridegroom brings His bride no languorous ecstasy ; His words are a trumpet-call to the soul. " Now then, act courageously ! " he says. And with unfaltering resolution Catherine obeyed the call.

The Voice speaking in her soul, the Voice of the Bridegroom, urged her to resume once more the life of every day in all its small details and trivialities. " Behold, the hour of dinner is at hand ; go up therefore and take thy place at dinner with thy family, and then return to Me." In obedience to the Voice, she began once again to perform the menial duties of the house—sweeping the floors, cleaning the dishes, serving in the kitchen, and often, when the household slept, washing the dirty linen. But not only did she deem herself bidden to take her place again in domestic life. Brother Raymund

interprets the words sounding in her ears: "Open to me, my sister, my beloved, my dove," as meaning: Open for Me the gates of souls that I may enter them. Open the path by which My sheep may pass in and out, and find pasture. Open for My honour thy treasury of divine grace and knowledge, and pour it forth upon the faithful."

But before we come to Catherine's work in the outer world let us touch for a moment on the little group that she gathered about her in her cell. No relationship has ever been more beautiful than Catherine's to her spiritual family; no mother could have yearned with more devoted love over her earthly children than Catherine over her "sons and daughters." "My son," she said to one of her disciples, "know that my Divine Saviour, having given me a spiritual family, leaves me in ignorance of nothing that concerns them." It is difficult to remember that it is a girl, or at least a young woman, who speaks—Catherine died at the age of thirty-three. A small group among the sisters of her order were with her always, and for these she had the most tender affection. She was united to her confessor and biographer, Brother Raymund, by a strong attachment. The little dark underground cell, with its candles ever burning, became a sacred place to the men and women who crowded it, to listen to Catherine's words, to write her letters—those letters, which, more than any other record, give us a living picture of her character. She only learned to write three years before her death, but

she continued to the end dictating her letters, sometimes two or three at a time. Three youths of noble birth constituted themselves her secretaries, "binding themselves to her in worship and love and friendship": a spiritual tie of whole-hearted devotion, which she describes in the "Dialogue" as the means chosen by God to raise a soul as yet imperfect in love to the perfection of love. "By thus conceiving a spiritual and absorbing love for some one creature, such a soul frees herself from all unworldly passions, and advances in virtue, by this ordered love casting out all disordered affections. By the unselfishness and perfection of her love for such a friend, the soul can test the perfection or imperfection of her love for God."

Two of her secretaries, Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi and Stephen Maconi, were close friends. Both men belonged to noble families of Siena, and their liking for each other was no doubt stimulated by extreme diversity of character. Neri was a scholar and a poet of some reputation, delicate and sensitive in temperament to a fault; brooding, self-tormenting, trembling always on the verge of morbid fears. It needed all Catherine's sympathetic insight and firm encouragement to keep the balance of this too lightly poised nature from dipping to despondency. "You asked me to receive you as a son," she writes to Neri in the first of her letters to him, "and therefore I, unworthy, miserable and wretched as I am, have already received you and receive you with affectionate love; and I pledge, and will

pledge myself, for ever in the sight of God, to bear the weight for you of all the sins you have committed or may commit." Stephen Maconi, bred to the profession of arms, gay, lively, full of high spirits and drollery, was the disciple whom Catherine loved best. Could anything be more tender than this from a letter that Catherine wrote at Genoa to Stephen's mother: "Take comfort sweetly and be patient and do not be troubled because I have kept Stephen too long; for I have taken good care of him. Through love and affection I have become one thing with him, and therefore I have taken what is yours as though it were mine own. I am sure that you are not really displeased. For you and for him together, I would fain do my very utmost, even unto death. You, mother, have given birth to him once; and I wish to give birth to him and you and all your family, in tears and in labour, through continual prayer and desire for your salvation."

We might multiply quotations endlessly to illustrate the deep yearning love that Catherine had for every soul. She ends one of her letters to a brother who had left his order: "If I were near at hand, I would know what demon had stolen away my little sheep, and what is the bond that keeps him bound, so that he does not return to the flock with the others. But I will strive to see it by means of continual prayer, and with this knife to cut the bond that holds him; and then my soul will be happy."

Love was indeed the central fact of Catherine's

universe. Her faith is concentrated in one sublime phrase: "For nails would not have held God-and-Man fast to the cross, had love not held Him there." "Think," she writes, "that the first raiment that we had is love; for we are created to the image and likeness of God only by love, and therefore man cannot be without love, for he is made of naught else than very love; for all he has, according to the soul, and according to the body, he has of love." In the "Dialogue" the voice of the Eternal speaks to her thus:

"All love that you bear Me you owe Me as a debt, and not as a free gift, because you are bound to give it Me; and I love you freely, not in duty bound. You cannot, then, render to Me the love that I require of you; and therefore have I set you in the midst of others, in order that you may do to them what you cannot do to Me—that is, love them freely and without reserve, and without expecting any return from it. . . . So this love must be flawless, and you must love them with the love wherewith you love Me."

The "Dialogue" was dictated by Catherine to her secretaries while she was in a state of trance. Christ in this book is symbolized as the Bridge leading from heaven to earth—"that is, the earth of your humanity is joined to the greatness of the Deity thereby." Much of the "Dialogue" escapes the modern reader, and some of it may repel him; for Catherine (unlike Dame Juliana of Norwich) accepts in all its implications the dogmas of her time concerning

eternal damnation. But even the ultra-modern and the uninitiated can appreciate passages of extraordinary beauty and insight and depth and range, that reveal vista after vista, abyss after abyss. We are apt to think of mediæval conceptions as concrete, vivid, narrow, but where in the literature of religion shall we find passages vaster or more sublime in scope than in this volume written in the vernacular by a dyer's daughter ?

"How glorious," says the Voice of the Eternal, "is that soul which has indeed been able to pass from the stormy ocean to Me, the Sea Pacific, and in that Sea, which is Myself, to fill the pitcher of her heart."

Before we follow Catherine into the outer world, let us join the mediæval crowd who press into her cell—verily to her "the Cell of Self-Knowledge." Some are drawn by an irresistible spiritual attraction—the spell of her holiness and purity ; some have come from idle curiosity, for it is reported that this woman works miracles, and many wonders are told of her. When her heart tended heavenward, Raymund writes, "her limbs became stiff, her eyes closed, and her body, raised in the air, often diffused a perfume of exquisite sweetness."

Perhaps, however, as we crowd into the candle-lighted dusk, we shall find no wonders, but only a little group in white habits with black mantles, and one frail woman of delicate features and piercing

grey eyes arranging the flowers that she loves—roses, lilies and violets—and singing as she works. And though we are strangers from another country with alien methods of life and thought, yet we too experience in her presence something of that ancient awe and reverence that was felt in the fourteenth century because, explain it as we may, we feel that the springs of her being are fed from an inexhaustible fountain-head of energy and of love, the "Sea Pacific," "the endless fulfilling of all true desires."

In the World

It is amid scenes of plague and of blood that we see Catherine next.

Powerful pens, both contemporary and inspired by contemporary record, have built up for us the horror of the Black Death. It is still so vivid in the minds of many to-day that it seems almost like a dark inexpugnable memory. Even after five centuries we turn from the thought of it with terror and loathing. But there was one who walked familiarly through the stricken streets with firm courage and smiling countenance; who knew no fear, no repugnance; who tended the sick, who comforted them with prayers and song, who prepared the blackened bodies for burial, and buried them with her own hands. Catherine, living on a few raw herbs, and needing only occasionally a couple of hours' sleep, ceased not her labours day or night. She worked in the hospitals, in the most

infected parts of the city, and organized a little band of sisters who went about with her doing untiring service for the love of God.

The Plague of 1374 nearly depopulated Europe. Siena lost eighty thousand of its people and never recovered its prosperity. Eight out of eleven of Lapa's grandchildren died.

> "Then in her sacred saving hands
> She took the sorrows of the lands,
> With maiden palms she lifted up
> The sick times blood-embittered cup,
> And in her virgin garment furled
> The faint limbs of a wounded world.
> Clothed with calm love and clear desire,
> She went forth in her soul's attire,
> A missive fire."

The time tested men as in a furnace, and some of her best-beloved disciples were won by Catherine in these scenes of horror. Her presence inspired courage and hope, and many of the plague-stricken were cured by her mere coming. And after the Plague was over, she ceased not her ministrations to the sick and the despairing. She healed old family feuds—she penetrated into prisons—she was no stranger at public executions. One of her letters—one of the famous letters of the world—written immediately after such an execution when the blood was still warm on her garments, reveals Catherine to us with a colour and fulness not elsewhere achieved. The letter is written to Brother Raymund in a crisis of emotion, in a whirl of passion-

ate and exalted feeling that pours red-hot from a heart on fire.

A young nobleman from Perugia, Niccolò di Toldo, had uttered some unguarded words, half in jest, against the Government of Siena ; and was condemned to death. His first incredulity was followed by an agony of pitiable terror and despair. Catherine heard of his state and went to him in prison. This is how she writes to Brother Raymund after the execution :

" I went to visit him of whom you know, whereby he received such great comfort and consolation that he confessed, and disposed himself right well ; and he made me promise by the love of God that, when the time of execution came, I would be with him ; and so I promised and did. Then in the morning, before the bell tolled, I went to him, and he received great consolation ; I brought him to hear Mass, and he received the Holy Communion, which he had never received since from the first. That will of his was harmonized with and subjected to the will of God, and there only remained a fear of not being strong at the last moment ; but the measureless and inflamed goodness of God forestalled him, endowing him with so much affection and love in the desire of God, that he could not stay without Him, and he said to me : ' Stay with me, and do not abandon me, so shall I fare not otherwise than well, and I shall die content ' ; and he leaned his head upon my breast. Then I exulted, and seemed to smell his blood, and mine too, which I desire to shed

for the sweet Spouse Jesus, and, as the desire increased in my soul and I felt his fear, I said: 'Take heart, sweet brother mine, for soon shall we come to the nuptials; thou wilt fare thither bathed in the sweet blood of the Son of God, with the sweet name of Jesus, which I wish may never leave thy memory, and I shall be waiting for thee at the place of execution.' Now think, father and son, how his heart lost all fear, and his face was transformed from sadness to joy, and he rejoiced, exulted, and said: 'Whence comes such grace to me, that the sweetness of my soul should await me at the holy place of execution?' See, he had reached such light that he called the place of execution *holy*, and he said: 'I shall go all joyous and strong, and it will seem to me a thousand years till I come thither, when I think that you are awaiting me there'; and he spoke so sweetly of God's goodness, that one might scarce sustain it. I awaited him, then, at the place of execution; and I stayed there, waiting, with continual prayer, in the presence of Mary and of Catherine, Virgin and Martyr. But before he arrived, I placed myself down, and stretched out my neck on the block; but nothing was done to me, for I was full of love of myself; then I prayed and insisted, and said to Mary that I wished for this grace, that she would give him true light and peace of heart at that moment, and then that I might see him return to his end. Then was my soul so full that, albeit a multitude of the people was there, I could not see a creature, by reason of the sweet

promise made me. Then he came, like a meek lamb, and, seeing me, he began to laugh, and he would have me make the sign of the cross over him; and when he had received the sign I said: 'Down! to the nuptials, sweet brother mine, for soon shalt thou be in eternal life.' He placed himself down with great meekness, and I stretched out his neck, and bent down over him, and reminded him of the blood of the Lamb. His mouth said naught but *Jesus* and *Catherine*; and, as he spoke thus, I received his head into my hands, closing my eyes in the Divine Goodness, and saying: *I will.*"

Then she tells that it seemed to her as if the heavens opened, and she saw God-and-Man, as might the clearness of the sun be seen; and He received the blood and the desire and the soul of the victim, blood into blood, flame into flame. But as the soul entered into Christ's wounded side "she turned to me, even as the bride, when she has come to her bridegroom's door, turns back her eyes and her head to salute those who have accompanied her, and thereby to show sign of thanks. Then did my soul repose in peace and quiet, in such great odour of blood that I could not bear to free myself from the blood that had come upon me from him. . . ." After reading such a letter we begin to understand a little of what Catherine meant by her oft-repeated words:

"Bathe yourself in the blood of Jesus Crucified. Hide yourself in the open wound of His Side, and you will behold the Secret of His Heart. There the sweet

Truth will make known to you that all that He did for us he did only of love. Return Him love for love."

It is little wonder that this is the picture of Catherine that has impressed most vividly the imagination of the world. This scene of injustice, of ugliness, of brutality is transfigured into something sublime ; all the coarse elements are burned up in a fierce, pure flame. Seldom indeed have the "shambles where we die" been penetrated by more purging fire ; never has blood been more passionately realized as a symbol of outpouring love and sacrifice. It is difficult for us of this age to pass beyond the crude physical horror, even to sympathize with Catherine's fevered exaltation ; but Catherine dominated the scene with her heroic soul, compelled it to yield up its spiritual qualities—the qualities of burning charity, of faith and of hope. She poured over this petty judicial murder a radiance as of divine glory.

Nothing less than her passion of love could have sent a quickening and purifying fire though the mass of inertion and corruption which represented the Church of her day. Catherine was the Church's devoutest daughter, and in a sense her life was one long martyrdom to its cause ; but, outspoken daughter of the people, she did not scruple to call by their true names the vices that festered in its very core. Her letters, her "Dialogue," reveal an appalling condition of things. The Pope was at Avignon, practically a dependent on the French

king; Rome was deserted and half in ruins; rapacious papal legates oppressed the cities, and the clergy were corrupt almost beyond belief. "Those who should be the temples of God are the stables of swine," writes Catherine; "they carry the fire of hatred and vengeance and an evil will in their souls." "Sweetest my daughter," God says to Catherine, "thou seest how she (the Church) has soiled her face with impurity and self-love, and become swollen with the pride and avarice of those who feed at her bosom." Money wrung from the starving poor was squandered upon harlots; unnatural vice prevailed in the religious houses. "How!" exclaims Catherine, "God has not commanded the ground to open or wild beasts to devour you!" She writes to Don Giovanni of the cells of Vallombrosa: "Ah me, ah me, misfortunate my soul! I see the Christian religion lying a dead man, and I neither weep nor mourn over him. I see darkness invading the light, for by the very light of most holy faith, received in the blood of Christ, I see men's sight become confused, and the pupil of their eye dried up."

It seems likely that Catherine's attacks on the clergy led to the calumnies that at first pursued her; there were evil tongues ready to impugn her chastity, and cruel hands to cast her forth from the church when she was in ecstasy. "Every evening, for many years, when it began to grow dusk," says Brother Thomas Caffarini, "she felt herself drawn by an irresistible force to God, passing into a rapture which generally lasted six hours, during which time she

conversed with the Eternal Wisdom, her bodily senses remaining suspended." The Sacrament always stirred in her a fervour of devotion; and when the Prior of St Dominic decreed that after Communion she was to finish her prayers quickly and leave the church, he commanded what was impossible. So the friars used to thrust her out violently on a dung-heap in the burning sun, to be kicked by the passers-by; while some devoted friends, bathed in tears, stood round to protect her from insult and from the cruel heat, until she should return out of her rapture.

The political ideal towards which Catherine laboured so heroically was the restoration of the Church to its original purity, the establishment by it of a spiritual commonwealth to include all mankind in happy love and service of God. The abyss between the ideal and the actual has seldom been more wide and deep; and Catherine undertook a task beyond mortal strength. That she should have accomplished as much as she did bears witness, not only to the living faith that upheld her, but to her extraordinary knowledge of men and her unique qualities of statesmanship. The restoration of the papacy to Rome; the healing of the schism in the Church Visible; these were the two main issues to which Catherine devoted her political activities.

At first Catherine looked to a crusade as the supreme good to be desired. It was to serve a two-fold object, spiritual and political; to inflame men with the love of Christ, and to weld together in common aim the nations and princes of Christendom,

engaged in constant and deadly strife. The marauding bands of mercenaries who were ravishing Europe were to be enrolled under the cross, and the land freed from a cruel scourge. When in 1373 Pope Gregory proclaimed a crusade, Catherine flung herself with all the ardour of her soul into the cause. Her letters to kings and queens and princes are amazing in their vigour and boldness. She wrote to the captains of the mercenaries, to nobles, to private citizens, urging upon each the considerations most likely to move him. To that strange woman, Queen Joan of Naples, she wrote when the idea was still in its infancy: "Rise up, then, manfully, sweetest sister! It is no longer the time for sleep, for time sleeps not, but ever passes like the wind. For love's sake, lift up the standard of the most holy cross in your heart. Soon we must uplift it, for as I understand the Holy Father will proclaim the war against the Turks."

The following, from a letter of hers to Charles V. of France, shows that she was no respecter of persons:— "I beg that you be no longer a worker of so great harm and an obstacle of so great good as the recovery of the Holy Land, and of those poor, wretched souls who do not share in the blood of the Son of God. Of which thing you ought to be ashamed, you and the other Christian rulers; for this is a very great confusion in the sight of men and abomination in the sight of God, that war should be made against one's brother, and the enemy left alone. . . . No more of such folly and blindness! I tell you, on behalf of

Christ crucified, that you delay no longer to make this peace."

But all her efforts were abortive; the Church undergoing the "Babylonian Captivity" could no longer enforce a truce of God in this century of cruel wars—could no longer even claim undivided spiritual allegiance—its own sons were rebelling against it. Catherine had to abandon this cherished desire as matters of more pressing immediacy were thrust upon her.

We have tried to indicate with what tenderness, with what sympathetic insight, Catherine dealt with the very different temperaments of the friends and disciples that surrounded her. The two popes with whom she had personal relations were men opposite in character, and she used her marvellous intuition with the most delicate skill, encouraging and stimulating Gregory XI., whose weakness was notorious, curbing and soothing the violence of Urban IV.

Gregory XI. was a Frenchman, small in stature and in feature. He was a man of high aim and of blameless life, modest and gentle in character, but of irresolute will. His delicate face expressed that uncertainty of purpose which tormented his life; for, taking advantage of his weakness, every cabal in turn tried to gain dominion over him. Catherine wrote to him letters of a frank outspokenness that amazes us, calling him by the tender little names that a child uses to address its father. "If a wound when necessary is not cauterized or cut out with steel," she

writes, " but simply covered with ointment, not only does it fail to heal, but it infects everything, and many a time death follows from it. Oh me, oh me, sweetest ' Babbo ' mine ! This is the reason that all the subjects are infected by impurity and iniquity. Why does that shepherd go on using so much ointment ? Such a man is a right hireling shepherd, for, far from dragging his sheep from the power of the wolf, he devours them himself." She dares even suggest that if the Pope is not able to act with more decision, he had better relinquish his high office. " Since He has given you authority and you have assumed it you should use your virtue and power ; and if you are not willing to use it, it would be better for you to resign what you have assumed ; more honour to God and health to your soul would it be."

It is a surprise to many that popes should have received with humility these bold and severe admonitions addressed to them by a daughter of the people. It is an even greater surprise to read that the republic of Florence entrusted this woman who had neither education, rank, nor standing, with a diplomatic mission of the utmost importance and delicacy. It is a surprise to us of the twentieth century ; but in the fourteenth centuryit excited no comment. Catherine's contemporaries recognized in her greatness and inspiration, and questioned no further. They held that God bestowed His gifts independent of sex. Here are Catherine's own words :

" ' Lord, how can I, who am so miserable and so

fragile, be useful to my fellow-creatures? For my sex is an obstacle, as Thou, Lord, knowest, as well because it is contemptible in men's eyes, as because propriety forbids any freedom of converse with the other sex.' 'The word *impossible* belongeth not to God. Am not I He who created the human race, who formed both man and woman? I pour out the favour of My spirit on whom I will . . . and all are equal before Me. Go forth without fear in spite of reproach.' "

The rapacity and cruel extortions of the papal officials in governing the states of the Church was the immediate cause of the formation of the League against the Pope. Florence headed the League, and by 1375 eighty cities had joined it. Gregory at first waged war with all the terrible spiritual weapons at his command. Against Florence he hurled an atrocious interdict, which not only paralyzed the religious life of the republic, but ruined its trade. Priests were forbidden to say Mass, all the privileges granted to Florence were withdrawn, the persons and possessions of Florentines living out of Florence were given over as a prey to who could master them. Driven to desperation, the Florentines had no alternative but open war.

To Catherine these events were an exceeding anguish. Her heart bled for the wrongs of Florence, but rebellion against the Pope was to her a mortal sin. "I am dying of grief and cannot die," she writes. After long brooding and prayer a vision came to her,

in which she was bidden to take an olive branch in her hand, and bearing the cross upon her shoulders, go forth and bring peace between the Holy Father and his rebellious children. She believed that if only the Pope would come to Italy, all would be well. "Come as a brave and fearless man," she writes to Gregory, "but take heed, as you value your life, not to come with armed men, but with the cross in your hand, like a meek lamb. If you do so you will fulfil the will of God; but if you come in other wise you would not fulfil, but transgress it."

Already, however, the Pope had sent into Italy ten thousand Breton mercenaries under the command of Cardinal Count Robert of Geneva. This graceful man of the world, this perpetrator of one of the most cruel massacres of history—the Massacre of Cesena—was afterwards to be elected Pope as Clement VII., the Anti-Pope, through whom the Great Schism came into the Church.

Nothing illustrates more forcibly the unutterable atrocities of the mercenaries of the Church, and the appalling treachery and brutality of its high dignitaries, than the story of the Massacre of Cesena. Cesena was one of the cities loyal to the Pope, and Count Robert quartered his mercenaries there for the winter, giving them leave to take what they needed without payment. The lusts and extortions of these unscrupulous soldiers led to a rising in which some hundreds of the Bretons were killed, and the rest driven from the city. Count Robert, by false promises, induced the citizens to lay down their arms

and to open the gates. The Bretons then fell upon the inhabitants and slaughtered indiscriminately men, women and children. Four thousand of the inhabitants were slain ; five thousand were driven out to die on the roads, or seek what shelter they might in the neighbouring towns.

It is only one who has entered into the very heart of love that can experience in its full horror the hideousness of this deed of hatred. Even the knowledge of God often brings increase of sorrow, for, says the Voice of the Eternal in the " Dialogue," the more the soul knows of My Truth "the more pain and intolerable grief she feels at the offences committed against Me." When the offences are committed by God's own Church and people, the contrast between the ideal and the actual is almost too sharp to be borne. It is a marvel that this " pain and intolerable grief " did not paralyse Catherine's faculties and powers ; did not jar beyond remedy her highly strung organization. But her calm, her grip of practical affairs never deserted her. To the Florentines she wrote, imploring them to seek submission ; to Gregory she wrote, urging forbearance. The Florentines summoned her to their city, that she might give them her personal help and counsel in their dire straits.

The chief men of the city came out to meet her and she was received with all honour. The republic was divided by contending factions with different administrative functions who held opposed views. After many conferences, Catherine was induced by

the leaders of the moderate party to undertake a mission to Avignon and present their case to the Pope. She was to be the forerunner of an embassy armed with full powers to ratify peace on the terms she had arranged. So with her little band of disciples, including Brother Raymund, Stephen Maconi, and her three beloved women friends of the order, Catherine set out, and reached Avignon on 18th June 1376.

The Pope's palace on the hill—"the finest and strongest building in the world," says Froissart—without, a great fortress of stone; within, soft and brilliant with all the luxuries of the age—dominated the little town of Avignon. Its magnificent walls of squared stone, flanked by thirty-nine towers, enclosed a centre of wealth and learning. Churches and monasteries and public buildings were there in such number that the myriad music of the bell towers gave the city the name of "la ville sonnante." The great cardinals kept the state of princes; gorgeous cavalcades clattered along the narrow streets; cloth of gold and scarlet shone in the southern sun. Nor did Avignon lack the even more dazzling pageant of ladies' apparel, for the sisters and nieces of the great dignitaries, and other ladies who assumed these titles to which they had no right, made the streets blaze with their extravagant splendour. Avignon had changed little since Petrarch wrote: "I know by experience that there is no piety there, no charity, no faith, no reverence for God nor any fear of Him, nothing holy, nothing just, nothing

PALACE OF THE POPES, AVIGNON

worthy of man. Love, purity, decency, candour are banished from it. All things are full of lies and hypocrisy. The voices of angels conceal the designs of demons."

Catherine and her party were lodged in the palace of an absent cardinal and two days after her arrival she had private audience with the Pope, Brother Raymund acting as interpreter, for Gregory knew no Italian, and Catherine no Latin. Later, she pleaded the cause of the Florentines in full consistory, with such persuasion, that the Pope left the whole matter in her hands. "The Holy Father," says Raymund, "in my presence and by my mouth, said to her: 'In order to show you that I sincerely desire peace, I commit the entire negotiation into your hands; only be careful of the honour of the Church.'"

Gregory fell immediately under the sway of Catherine's burning personality. Her mission would have been crowned with immediate success, but for the bad faith of the Florentines. Weeks passed—months—and still the embassy that was to have followed her delayed. "I doubt not, my daughter," said the Pope, "that they have deceived you as they deceived me." And so it proved; for when the envoys at last arrived, they refused to consult with Catherine or to acknowledge her mission.

While Catherine was waiting in Avignon she set herself a task the magnitude of which it is difficult to realize—no less than to induce the Pope to return to Rome. A woman, Bridget, Queen of Sweden,

had already persuaded one Pope back for a short space of time; but after a few months he had returned to Avignon. Catherine was convinced that there would be no peace in the Church, no peace in Italy, till the Pope was once more in the Eternal City. Alone she set her strength against the dead weight of selfishness, of self-interest, that kept the popes at Avignon. Nearly all the cardinals were French; their possessions, their glories, their pleasures were bound up with Avignon. Rome was disturbed; Italy actively rebellious; prudence, inclination, material considerations, were all against the journey. Catherine had nothing to oppose to this tremendous force of influence but a vague ideal. And yet, by sheer will-power, she conquered, overrode all obstacles, infused courage into the weak Pope, stimulated his sense of duty, sustained his wavering resolution, soothed his fears. It was not enough to incite him by strong spiritual appeals; she had to work upon every part of his nature. The cardinals frightened him into the belief that he would be poisoned in Rome, or die of malaria; Catherine had to show him the unlikelihood of such catastrophes. She even advised him to conceal the date of his departure, so overwhelming was the opposition to his design. "I beseech your Holiness in the name of Christ Crucified to make haste," she wrote to him. "Adopt a holy deception; let it seem that you are going to delay for a time, and then do it swiftly and suddenly, for the more quickly it is done, the sooner will you be freed from these tor-

ments and troubles." So great was the opposition, that Gregory no longer dared to see Catherine; communication had to be conducted by letters and messengers. At last, after weeks and months, all obstacles, all scruples, were overcome, and the Pope left the palace. His father threw himself on the ground imploring him not to go, and Gregory had to step over the prostrate figure. In twenty-two galleys the Pope and his followers set sail from Marseilles for Genoa. Catherine left Avignon the same day by another route.

One of the most dramatic episodes in this dramatic story took place at Genoa. Catherine and the Pope were both in the city. Even now, at the eleventh hour, it was in Gregory's heart to retreat. He desired to see Catherine, but dared not summon her openly to his presence, lest it should excite comment; neither could he visit her by day with dignity, for the room where she lodged was besieged by a throng of people, eager to see the saint and to listen to her words. So he came to her in the late evening, wrapped in the disguise of his cloak. What passed between them is not known; we only know that the Pope's courage returned, and he proceeded to Rome, reaching the holy city on 17th January 1377. We find this note affixed to one of Catherine's prayers: "This prayer was made at Genoa by the said virgin, to persuade Pope Gregory from the project of returning back: things contrary to the journey to Rome having been deliberated on in the consistory."

So Catherine accomplished the first of her great political enterprises, and brought the popes permanently back to the Eternal City.

She accomplished a second great purpose too—the reconciliation of Florence to the papal authority—accomplished it, however, almost at the price of that martyrdom she so much desired. In 1378 Gregory sent Catherine on a second embassy to Florence. She made three orations before three bodies of magistrates; but for seventeen months Florence had been under the interdict, and the city was in a pitiable condition of poverty and misery. A rabble of people, incensed to fury against the Pope, set out to murder his emissary. Catherine was in a distant part of the town in a little house on the hillside of St George with her disciples and women. The armed mob found her in the garden. She came to meet them, and, kneeling before the leader, bared her throat and bade him strike. "I am Catherine; do to me whatever God will permit; but I charge you, in the name of the Almighty, to hurt none of these who are with me." At these words the courage of the rabble failed, and they went away in confusion. Later, when the tumult had calmed down, she persuaded the rulers of the city to listen to her counsels, and she had the supreme satisfaction of seeing peace signed between the unruly children and their spiritual father (1378).

In this year Gregory died in Rome, and the events following his death led to the Great Schism.

There were sixteen cardinals at Rome, four

Italians, one Spanish, the rest French. The people of Rome clamoured for the election of a Roman, or at least an Italian, Pope; threatening mobs assembled under the walls of the Vatican. The cardinals, with all due regard for forms and ceremonies, elected as Pope a Neapolitan, the Archbishop of Bari, who afterwards took the name of Urban; but the mob, hearing a rumour that Tebaldeschi, the aged Cardinal of St Peter's, was elected, burst into the palace, and the cardinals in a panic forced Tebaldeschi to assume against his will the papal robe, and to receive the tumultuous congratulations of the mob. Next day, when the noise had subsided, the cardinals ratified the election of Urban, the customary acts of homage were paid him and he was installed with all due honour.

Urban was in every respect a striking contrast to his predecessor. Like Gregory, he was a man of pure life and high aim; but where Gregory failed through infirmity of purpose, Urban failed through arbitrary violence. He was an Italian, a Neapolitan though not a Roman; short of stature, thick-set, sallow in complexion; uncouth, lacking in grace and culture, easily moved to anger. He was reported by his contemporaries "a terrible man, and greatly frightens people by his acts and words." He had a true zeal for reform, but he set about the task with a fierce and tactless unrestraint that soon set the whole Church buzzing round his ears. He insulted the cardinals at the very first sitting, calling them in public, "fools" and "liars"; he levied

injurious accusations against the bishops. In vain Catherine wrote to him to "restrain a little those too quick movements with which nature inspires you." In vain she sought to check his ungovernable actions. At last he made himself so unbearable to the cardinals that they were driven to snatch at the first pretext to rid themselves of him. Impossible to enter here into the numerous intrigues which complicated the situation. Suffice it to say that all the cardinals, except the aged Tebaldeschi, assembled at Anagni; proclaimed that Urban had been elected through fear of the populace, and was no true Pope, but Antichrist; and proceeded to elect a second Pope, no other than the infamous Count Robert of Geneva, who took the name of Clement VII. Urban immediately nominated twenty-six new cardinals: two Frenchmen, the rest Italian.

So was accomplished the Great Schism which for forty years divided Christendom into two camps of deadly enemies.

It is difficult to conceive the anguish that these events caused Catherine. Her whole exterior life had been set to bring peace within the Church; and now she was to witness its very body cut in twain, the Pope, her "sweet Christ on earth," deserted, insulted by his nearest sons. She was, indeed, to see the situation close, in all its naked horror, for Urban, feeling that her presence would strengthen his position, summoned her to Rome.

And so we arrive at the last stage of Catherine's life, her stay in the Holy City—a city divided against

itself, decayed and in ruins, the prey to corruption and intrigue, the Breton mercenaries of the Anti-Pope soon to be battering against its walls. Catherine came with some forty of her disciples and friends; came with body worn by physical infirmities to encounter acutest mental and spiritual anguish; but her will and her courage never wavered. Her firm determination to live only upon alms brought her little band often to the verge of starvation. Yet she never slackened in her fiery correspondence, and helped to win Germany, Hungary and Sweden to acknowledge Urban's claims. She spoke before the Pope and cardinals in full consistory, and when she had ended, Urban exclaimed: "Behold, my brethren, how contemptible we are before God, when we give way to fear. This poor woman puts us to shame; whom I call so, not out of contempt, but by reason of the weakness of her sex, which should make her timid even if we were confident; whereas, on the contrary, it is she who now encourages us."

In this crisis of life and death Catherine bethought her of the little hermitages scattered all over Italy, where men of holy lives devoted themselves selflessly to God's service. She had seen at close quarters the scheming ecclesiastics of Rome; not from them was spiritual force to be drawn; but the hermits would make about the Pope a bulwark of sanctity and righteousness, and bear witness to the truth. So she urged upon Urban the advisability of summoning to Rome these humble servants of

God. The suggestion seemed to Urban worth trying; and to all the scattered cells, where for long years the recluses had lived in undisturbed solitude and prayer, the call was sent. Catherine wrote with her own hand burning letters, invoking them to come to the Church's aid. It was the expedient of an idealist; to Catherine its non-success must have been tragic. For many hermits refused outright to leave their cells, among them Catherine's friend, Brother William Flete of England. Of those who obeyed, Catherine herself gives us a pathetic picture: "Old men," she says of two Dominican hermits from the Umbrian plain, "old men, and far from well, who have lived such a long time in their peace, they have made the laborious journey, and are now valiantly suppressing their home-sickness, and unsaying their involuntary complaints." But such as these could not prove the unconquerable allies that Catherine had hoped to find. Her disappointment is well seen in a scornful letter she addresses to a recalcitrant solitary. "Now really, the spiritual life is quite too lightly held if it is lost by change of place. Apparently God is an accepter of places, and is found only in a wood, and not elsewhere in time of need!"

It was in this hour of bitter disillusion, when she was only thirty-three years old, that Catherine died. Early in 1379 began the three months' death agony—an anguish so long drawn out, so painful, that we of this age can hardly bear to read it. To Catherine herself it seemed that what she endured she endured

in some mystical sense for the Church; that in her own body she was expiating the sins of humanity. To Brother Raymund she writes: "In this, and in many other ways which I cannot narrate, my life is being distilled and consumed in this sweet Spouse; I in this fashion and the glorious martyrs with their blood. . . . This body keeps without any food, even without a drop of water; with such great and sweet bodily torments as I never endured at any time, so that my life hangs upon a thread."

Again and again we stand wholly at a loss before the mediæval conception of suffering. Our aim is to eliminate suffering from life, not to seek and to welcome it. Suffering is no longer regarded as expiation for personal or for general sin, or as a means of purification. Baron von Hügel has perhaps in the following passage got closer than any other modern commentator to the mediæval conception:

"But with Him (Christ) and alone with Him, and those who still learn and live from and by Him, there is the union of the clearest, keenest sense of all the mysterious depth and breadth and length and height of human sadness, suffering and sin, *and* in spite of this and through this and at the end of this, a note of conquest and of triumphant joy.

"And here, as elsewhere in Christianity, this is achieved, not by some artificial facile juxta-position; but the soul is allowed to sob itself out; and all this its pain gets fully faced and willed, gets taken up into the conscious life. Suffering thus becomes

the highest form of action, a divinely potent means of satisfaction, recovery and enlargement for the soul—the soul with its mysteriously great consciousness of pettiness and sin, and its immense capacity for joy in self-donation."

"A note of conquest and of triumphant joy." It is on this note that we would close our imperfect sketch of Catherine of Siena. Increase of love, the Voice says in the "Dialogue," means increase of grief. By the light of the Eternal, the cruelty, the waste, the ruin of this world show with a distinctness that is terrible; but all-embracing Love understands, pardons, heals. It finds no sore too festering, no wound too ugly for its tender power. Catherine was no immured nun, ignorant of the worst facts of life. She faced them all, exposed them all; and we, immersed in material problems, find inspiration in her courage that fronted without quailing vice, disease, death. By that courage, fed as she believed from divine sources, she scaled the ladders of heaven, and on earth overcame the forces of darkness and of evil. If politically she misread the signs of the times, if she committed errors and experienced failures, it was because she shared in the imperfections common to all here below. But no life has surpassed hers in sacrifice and devotion, no one has borne more flaming witness to the Unseen, to its inexhaustible fountains of love, than Catherine of Siena.

ST TERESA

The Seventh Mansion

TO compress the quintessence of character into a few lines requires the skill of a poet. Only the poet has the genius of insight that can penetrate into the recesses of personality ; only the poet has the gift to bring back intact into this world the wonder and beauty of the secret he has won. Some natures are so infinitely complex that without the poet's help we might miss the reading of them altogether. So, first of all, let us go to Crashaw for his splendid lines on St Teresa :

" O thou undaunted daughter of desires !
By all thy dower of lights and fires,
By all the eagle in thee, all the dove,
By all thy lives and deaths of love,
By thy large draughts of intellectual day
And by thy thirsts of love more large than they ;
By all thy brim-fill'd bowls of fierce desire,
By thy last morning's draught of liquid fire,
By the full kingdom of that final kiss,
That seized thy parting soul and seal'd thee His ;
By all the heavens thou hast in Him,
Fair sister of the seraphim !
By all of Him we have in thee
Leave nothing of myself in me :
Let me so read thy life that I
Unto all life of mine may die.[12]

Here we have Teresa caught for us at the point of most burning intensity; her supreme spiritual conquest, her superb intellectual mastery, fixed in memorable language.

It is of special importance in the case of St Teresa to start with the flaming impression which the life and the books of this "sweet incendiary" have made upon a soul alive to their greatness; for her life and her books offer so many fascinating problems to psychology and metaphysics, that there is a danger of our becoming absorbed in processes and details, and so losing sight of ultimates. Amid experiences overwhelming in their wonder and their terror, St Teresa has retained an intellectual balance, a power of analysis and description, that render her works of extraordinary scientific value. The various degrees of prayer, the various kinds of vision, the various stages of spiritual progress, are set forth with unequalled force and lucidity; she uses imagery restrained, yet full of light and colour. No other mystic has brought us so close to the states of mind and body that precede rapture and ecstasy, and persist while these endure. And therefore in the study of her classifications and carefully measured divisions, it is well never to lose sight of the fact that they are but the scaffolding of that Interior Castle of the Seven Mansions where the soul finds union with the divine. It would be unfitting and unfair were the intellectual greatness of the saint to overshadow her spiritual greatness, were her accuracies of description to diminish in our eyes the soaring spontaneity of her

experience. We would endeavour to remember her not as the "psychologist among the saints," but as the "undaunted daughter of desires."

Of all the great saints, Teresa is nearest to us in point of time. She is modern in the importance she attaches to observation and reasoning; modern in her criticism of men and things, and in the doubts that continually assail her. For this reason, perhaps, her books have special appeal for the modern mind. She found her way experimentally, without guidance; she went by an intricate path, while her friends and confessors were the cause of cruel misgivings. We can follow her with comprehension, if not with sympathy, along a great part of her route; and her methods enable us to enter into subtleties of mysticism usually beyond the grasp of all but the initiated. She succeeds in making clear the most elusive conditions of soul. Her writings on prayer, on vision, on union, exceed in importance, if not in interest, for us of this age, the lifework which she set herself—namely, the reform of the Carmelite Order.

At the first glance Teresa's life seems to be sharply cut into two portions. On the one side of the dividing line we have the contemplative struggling for decades up the difficult way of mysticism, until at last she reaches the final consummation. On the other side of the dividing line—the latter portion of her life—we see the indomitable woman of action; travelling in all weathers about the country in a cart without springs that she may establish her Reform. On the one side we have a record of spiritual adven-

tures in an air so pure that only the boldest may follow; on the other we read of worldly encounters with irate town councillors, angry provincials and dangerous papal nuncios. On one side stands the mystic "seized with such great transports of the love of God that I seem to be dying of the desire to be united to Him." On the other stands the foundress, eminently practical, not without sound common-sense and a saving humour, bound, as she herself tells us, "to accommodate her complexion to his with whom she conversed; glad if he was glad; sad with the sad. In fact to be all things to all men in order to win them all."

Looking more closely, however, we find that there was no arbitrary division in Teresa's life, but only, at a certain point, a consummation, an attainment, a synthesis. She was no longer rapt out of herself by God, but God had become the interior principle of her life. And the fruit of this union was action—it was destined for no other purpose, she tells us, but "the incessant production of work, work." Mystic and foundress, contemplative and woman of action, she is thus fundamentally one; and mystic and contemplative Teresa remained, through all the activity of her reform.

Teresa was forty-seven years old when, at the command of her confessor, she wrote her first autobiography. This was the book which for thirteen years lay in the hands of the Inquisition, after which time it was pronounced free from all taint of heresy. Like all her works, it was written in Spanish, and to

write in the vernacular was in itself suspect. The manuscript, in Teresa's fine, upright writing, lies in the reliquary of the Escorial at Madrid, beside an original tract of St Augustine's. She gave the story of her life merely to elucidate her states of soul. We cannot do better than follow her method, summarizing her account and supplementing it from other sources.

Teresa was born of a noble family at Avila in Old Castile in 1515, two years before Luther nailed his ninety-seven propositions against the Sale of Indulgences upon the church door. Avila, warlike and chivalrous, used to be called the City of the Knights, but after Teresa's death it became the City of the Saints. Its solid walls still stand, with its cathedral built into the ramparts, to symbolize that God First was the Rock of Defence. The hill-city dominated a wide stretch of country, sparsely cultivated—a landscape grey, monotonous, broken by granite boulders and pine forests, not without a certain wild dignity and beauty. Within the great houses of the city, life was a little grey, monotonous, austere, ordered by a severe ceremonial, even to minutest details ; it had a certain beauty of dignity and balance, of courtliness and self-control. For these virtues the Spaniard has always been famous, and Spain was then at the very height of her development and power. The New World was dazzling her senses—two of Teresa's brothers sought their fortunes overseas—but the spirit of adventure, of inquiry, was as yet only tentatively applied to realms other than the physical. Those with discerning

eyes might perhaps already have divined the seeds of decay—in the intoxication of riches found in the New World; in the heavy weight of persecution that was to crush out the life and spirit of the nation. But no dark forebodings disturbed the grave citizens of Avila. In the quiet of her home the child Teresa pored with her little brother Roderigo over the Lives of the Saints. One of the pictures most treasured in history shows us these two babies setting forth to find martyrdom at the hands of the Moors—the Moors whose fierce raids were still a potent memory in the minds of the citizens. The spot is still pointed out where the children were met by a relative and turned back.

As a child, the romances of religion captured Teresa's imagination; as a girl, the romances of chivalry took tumultuous possession of her. Teresa's mother, delicate in health, spiritual in soul, could not wean herself from the enthralment of these exciting tales. Their colour, their movement, their glamour, were an irresistible attraction in the severe monotony of Spanish life. Teresa, more ardent, plunged "soul forward, headlong into a book's profound." It cannot be doubted that the delight that the girl had in this reading exercised a great effect on her after life. We do not know whether Teresa ever experienced the passion of love; but we know that the romance of love intoxicated her imagination and dominated her thoughts. Mrs Cunningham Graham, in her interesting book, which deals however principally with the outer episodes of the saint's life,

describes Teresa's appearance in detail: "She was tall and well proportioned; her brow fair and spacious, encircled by an aureole of black curling hair; her eyebrows rather straight than arched and somewhat thick; her eyes black and round with rather heavy lids, although not large, well-placed, lively, and so full of merriment, that when they laughed, their laughter communicated itself irresistibly to those around her. Her hands were small and very beautiful, with long, tapering fingers. Her manners possessed an indescribable fascination, which charmed and magnetized all who came within the circle of her influence."

When her father put her for a year under the care of the nuns of an Augustinian convent at Avila, it was merely to remove her from the influence of some worldly relatives who, after her mother's death, were obtaining too great a hold upon the girl. He had no wish to see his favourite daughter a nun; nor had conventual life any attraction for Teresa. Yet she took the veil in spite of the strong opposition of father and relatives. The driving force that impelled her to do this was the fear of hell. "I remember," she writes, "that when I was leaving my father's house, I believe that at my death my feelings will not be greater than they were then. . . . As I had no love of God to remove the love I had for my father and friends, all I did then was with such great violence, that if our Lord had not helped me, my own considerations would never have been able to advance me forward."

It might have been thought that out of Fear could

come no good thing. At best it is the lowest motive for conduct; at worst it paralyses, demoralizes, blights, destroys. No one achieved a more supreme conquest over fear than St Teresa, no one has more vigorously extolled courage; but with fear as a starting-point we can better realize the vast tracts of distance accomplished by her soul.

The Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation, in which Teresa made her profession, lies in the valley below Avila, about half-a-mile to the north of the city walls. The Carmelites claim an antiquity superior to that of any other order—they look back to Elijah as their founder, if not Enoch. These pretensions led to a scandalous controversy in the seventeenth century; for the Bollandists, in certain volumes of the "Acta Sanctorum," made fun of the idea that Enoch could have founded the Carmelites, since Scripture made no mention of any Carmelite being shut up in the ark; and none of Noah's sons had made vows of chastity. The controversy raged ten years, and the Carmelites, in revenge for this aspersion upon their claims, obtained from the Spanish Inquisition a condemnation, not only of the volumes containing the passages objected to, but of the whole series of fourteen volumes. Also they procured a papal bull threatening any who should question the origin of their order with excommunication. It is, however, quite possible that since the time of Elijah a community of Jewish hermits may have inhabited Mount Carmel. Christian hermits certainly dwelt there till the Crusades drove them from the Holy Land. The Carmelites came to Europe

in 1238; in 1245 the Rule was mitigated by Pope Innocent IV.; in 1396 flesh meat was allowed to the White Friars of England; and in 1432 many other mitigations were made.

Thus it came about that conventual life was by no means arduous under the Mitigated Rule. The nuns of the Incarnation were permitted to go to and fro, and leave was easily obtained to pay long visits to relatives and friends. Even within the convent walls life was not the strait existence sometimes imagined. The convent buildings, "delightful and spacious," says Teresa, had large cloisters and a fine church. Pleasant gardens and orchards surrounded the house, and a clear and abundant stream ran through the grounds. Visitors, men as well as women, were allowed access to the convent parlour, where they mixed freely with the nuns. Young gallants clattered down from Avila to see a sister or a cousin, and bring them the news of the world; the sound of talk and laughter penetrated even into the remoter rooms of the convent, where the nuns sat spinning while the sunshine crept over the red-brick floors.

Teresa had joined the Carmelites because they had a reputation for a stricter observance than the Augustinians, and it was terrible for her to discover that she had merely exchanged one pleasure-loving existence for another. She was urged by an interior need, indefinite, vague, towards a perfection she could not reach. But her own nature, and all the circumstances of her life, were fighting against her. She had no gift of meditation; often she felt a positive

distaste to prayer. Further, any effort after greater retirement in the noisy convent (where there were one hundred and eighty nuns) was regarded as singular by the other sisters. "The road to religion is so little travelled," says Teresa, "that a sister who wishes to follow it has more to fear from her companions than from all the devils." A more serious obstacle barred her way of progress. She could not wean herself from the delight she took in conversation with visitors in the convent parlour. One "person" whom she met there had possibly some special emotional appeal. To us the pleasure seems a harmless one, but to her it was a temptation continually drawing her away from the Source of life. God called her, but she only listened with half a mind. The strength of the lure is shown by the fact that for eighteen years Teresa combated it in vain. She felt the shame of her divided allegiance; she believed that she was offering an insult to God by denying Him after she had vowed herself to His service, by putting her own self-gratification before His will; but the next day found her again in the convent parlour. "God called me on the one hand, and on the other the world; all the things of God gave me great pleasure, but the vanities of the world held me in chains; and it seemed I had a desire to reconcile these two contraries, which are such enemies one to another—namely, a spiritual life, and the pleasures and pastimes of the world. In prayer I endured great affliction, because my soul was not master, but a slave; and thus I was unable to retire within my

heart . . . without at the same time shutting up with me a thousand vanities." The energy that prompted her Reform in after years, drew its strength partly from her own difficult experience. Few writers of any sect or creed have spoken so bitterly as Teresa against conventual life as she knew it. She calls it "a short cut to hell." "Rather let fathers marry their daughters very meanly than allow them to face the dangers of ten worlds rolled into one, where youth, sensuality and the devil invite and incline them to follow things worldly of the worldly." This is strong language; but in the regulations Teresa afterwards laid down for her own nuns we may learn the nature of one of the dangers that threatened conventual life. "The sisters should have no intercourse with the confessor except at the confessional. The very existence of our institution depends on our preventing these black devotees destroying the spouses of Christ. The devil enters that way unperceived."

Teresa, upright and clear-sighted, is thus seen to be intensely aware of the many evils and temptations besetting conventual life. Even the less harmful ones were a snare to her, and hampered her progress along the spiritual road that already she was beginning to walk. For during these eighteen years, by slow degrees, by painful experiment, Teresa was learning the path of prayer. She went with stumbling feet, and without guidance. The way was new, and her confessors had no knowledge of the ground. The further she travelled

the more perplexed did they become, and the more ignorantly did they deal with unfamiliar conditions. Teresa speaks of "the affliction that arises from meeting with a confessor who is so cautious and has such little experience that he thinks nothing is secure; who fears everything, suspects everything . . . immediately ascribes everything, either to the devil, or to melancholy. . . . The poor soul which is possessed with the same fear, and goes to her confessor as to her judge, who, notwithstanding, condemns her, cannot help feeling great trouble and uneasiness."

At the end of eighteen years, when Teresa was forty, the conflict within herself suddenly ceased. The temptation of the "world," as represented by the convent parlour, was overcome for ever. In a moment she achieved complete self-surrender. The death of her father; a picture of the Christ "all covered with wounds"—these were the occasions of her "conversion." She had conquered the lure of outer things—she had been long in conquering it—but she was now only at the first stage of her journey. Problems infinitely more intricate, trials infinitely more disturbing, were to alternate during the next seventeen years of her life with experiences of ineffable bliss. We may follow her progress up to this moment of conversion in her own wonderful allegory of the Watered Garden.

Her progress is marked by degrees of prayer. Prayer, as understood by Teresa, is not petition; it is the preparation of the soul for an influx of

the divine. Here is a brief summary of her allegory:

"A beginner must look upon himself as making a garden wherein our Lord may take his delight, but in a soil unfruitful and abounding in weeds. . . . It seems to me that the garden may be watered in four ways: by water taken out of a well, which is very laborious; or with water raised by means of an engine and buckets drawn by a windlass—it is a less troublesome way than the first, and gives more water; or by a stream or brook, whereby the garden is watered in a much better way . . . or by showers of rain when our Lord Himself waters it without labour on our part—and this way is incomparably better than all the others of which I have spoken." Teresa then proceeds to describe in detail the various degrees of prayer—the prayer that is made by our own paltry efforts, and the prayer that is inspired by an increasing outpouring of divine life.

The first degree of prayer is Mental Prayer, dependent on Meditation. (Vocal Prayer is an antecedent stage which Teresa does not mention.) "The soul which begins to walk in the way of mental prayer with resolution, and is determined not to care much, neither to rejoice nor to be greatly afflicted, whether sweetness and tenderness fail it, or our Lord grants them, has already travelled a great part of the road." There are two dangers to be guarded against at this stage. The first is the neglect of the body. "Take care, then, of the

body, for the love of God, because at many other times the body must serve the soul ; and let recourse be had to some recreations—holy ones—such as conversation, or going out into the fields, as the confessor shall advise." " Experience is an excellent schoolmaster in everything, for it makes us understand what suits us ; and in all things God is served, for His yoke is sweet." The second danger is, to aspire to the supernatural states of prayer before the soul is called. Teresa is at one with all the great mystics in the strong belief that there should be no indiscreet forcing of the spiritual life.

The second degree of prayer is the Prayer of Quiet. " Here the soul begins to be recollected ; it is now touching on the supernatural . . . this is a gathering together of the faculties of the soul within itself, in order that it may have the fruition of that contentment in greater sweetness ; but the faculties are not lost, neither are they asleep ; the will alone is occupied in such a way that, without knowing that it has become a captive, it gives a simple consent to become the prisoner of God. . . . The Prayer of Quiet, then, is a little spark of the true love of Himself, which our Lord begins to enkindle in the soul ; and His Will is, that the soul should understand what this love is by the joy it brings."

The third degree of prayer is the Prayer of Union. In this state the soul is awake, and all the rest of the world asleep. " The pleasure, sweetness and delight are incomparably greater than in the former state of prayer ; and the reason is that the waters

of grace have risen up to the neck of the soul, so that it can neither advance nor retreat—nor does it know how to do so ; it seeks only the fruition of exceeding bliss. . . . This state of prayer seems to me a most distinct union of the whole soul with God, but for this, that His Majesty gives to the faculties leave to be intent upon, and have the fruition of the great work He is doing. . . . In the prayer (of Quiet) the soul, which would willingly neither stir nor move, is delighting in the holy repose of Mary ; but in this prayer (the third degree) it can be like Martha also."

The fourth degree of prayer includes Ecstasy and Rapture. Beyond Ecstasy, beyond Rapture, is the final stage of all, the Spiritual Marriage, the Seventh Mansion. But these heights were not trodden by Teresa till a later date, and before, with much stumbling, we attempt to follow her, we may note what safeguards and warnings Teresa has already set in the path ; what practical conclusions she has drawn from her experience.

We have pointed out that Teresa warns the disciple not to go even beyond the first stage of prayer without a special call from God. Her Autobiography is not a book written for the guidance of others, but a relation drawn up by order of her confessor on the state of her own soul. She is never tired of reminding her nuns that the contemplative life is not necessary for our salvation, nor an essential to it, and that the lack of it will not prevent any sister from reaching great perfection.

She expressly states that the withdrawal from bodily objects is only to be attempted by a soul that has made very great progress, "for until then it is clear that the Creator must be sought for through His creatures. . . . We are not angels, for we have a body; and to seek to make ourselves angels while we are on the earth, and so much on the earth as I was, is an act of folly."

Teresa's marvellous classification of the degrees of prayer seems to concentrate into small space the infinitudes of distance covered. To realize these even dimly we have to remember how many mystics have never gone beyond the second degree of prayer, the Prayer of Quiet. Indeed, to many, the term Mysticism is synonymous with passivity, and the whole business of prayer has been to hush the clamour of the senses and all the sounds of earth, so that the still small voice may be heard. To many great souls, both in the East and in the West, the Prayer of Quiet has been the attainment of the final goal. But to Teresa it is but a stage, and an early stage, on the journey. Passivity is but the "rest of motion"; in contemplation are to be found the springs of action; in the third degree of prayer Martha combines with Mary; and the fourth degree of prayer is the "time of resolutions, of heroic determinations, of the living energy of good desires." Teresa emphatically states that union with the divine is often reached rather by work than by prayer. "When I see souls so very careful about being attentive at their prayers, and about

understanding them also," she writes, "so that it seems they dare not so much as stir or divert their thoughts, lest they should lose the little pleasure and diversion they feel in their prayer, I then clearly discover how little they understand the way by which they may arrive at union, because they suppose all the business consists in this. No, sisters, no! our Lord desires *works*."

No dazzling adventures, no overwhelming experience, deprived Teresa of balance in her measurement of earthly affairs; her sense of proportion in human things, her sane outlook upon life are unfailing. And this will appear the more remarkable after we have endeavoured to tell something of her ecstasies, her raptures and her visions, and all the bewildering agonies and tormenting doubts that accompanied these experiences.

Teresa was forty, when her "conversion," already alluded to, took place; she is supposed to have been about fifty-seven when she reached the consummation, the final synthesis, the Seventh Mansion (1572). Of the activities of her exterior life during those seventeen years we will tell in the following chapter. We will here trace as far as may be her spiritual path during that period.

The overwhelming consciousness of the divine has come to mystics of all ages, sometimes with sharp suddenness, sometimes after long agonies of struggle and prayer. It has come in various ways and various shapes. This consciousness so transcends our humanity that often memory cannot

contain it, and even when remembered, language is an instrument inadequate for its expression. There are certain great passages in literature so immediate that they have some faint glow of the glory they would convey; but no mystic has written of these ineffable experiences with the same unimpassioned lucidity as St Teresa. Raptures and visions become frequent at this moment of her life.

Both in ecstasy and rapture, she tells us, the soul is as it were drawn from the body. Rapture differs from ecstasy both by its abruptness and its intensity. The following description of rapture is taken from the "Interior Castle":

"The rapture takes place in such a manner that the soul really seems to go out of the body, and yet, on the other hand, it is evident that the person is not dead—at least she cannot say whether for a few moments the soul be in the body or not. It seems to her that she has been altogether in another region quite different from this world in which we live, and then another light is shown to her, very different from this here below; and though she shall employ all her life long in trying to form an idea of this and other wonders, yet it would be impossible to understand them. She is in an instant taught so many things together, that should she spend many years in arranging them in her thoughts and imagination, she could not remember the one-thousandth part of them."

Elsewhere she describes rapture as a flight in the interior of the soul; she compares the soul in

rapture to "a small bird that has escaped from the misery of the flesh and the prison-house of the body." The Autobiography has a very beautiful passage on this flight: "O my God, how clear is the meaning of those words, and what good reason the Psalmist had and all the world will ever have, to pray for the wings of a dove! It is plain that this is the flight of the spirit rising upward above all created things, chiefly above itself; but it is a sweet flight, a delicious flight, a flight without noise."

Thus we see that according to Teresa's account, the soul brings back after rapture, not only the consciousness of another world and another light, but also the memory of mental illumination, an instant apprehension of all truth, so vast as to leave little more than a dazzling sensation. The passage in her works describing the light of vision shows how extraordinary is her power of conveying transcendental experience:

"It is a sight, the clearness and brightness of which exceeds all that can possibly be imagined in this world. It is not a splendour which dazzles, but a sweet lustre; nor does the light offend the eyes whereby we see this object of such divine beauty. It is a light so different from that of this world, that even the brightness of the sun itself, which we see, is dim in comparison with its brightness. It is as if we beheld very clear water running upon crystal, with the sun's rays reflected upon it and striking

through it, in comparison with other very muddy water seen in a cloudy day and running upon an earthy bottom."

Teresa's classification of the various kinds of vision need not detain us. She divides them into visions seen with the eyes of the body, visions seen with the eyes of the soul, and visions that are *felt*. Most of the visions that she had were of the latter kind; she *felt* the presence of Jesus beside her; the sensation lasted for days, sometimes for a much longer period. When this first happened, Teresa was terrified, and went to her confessor in great trouble. "He asked her how she knew it was our Lord, since she saw nothing? He also requested her to inform him what kind of countenance He had. She answered, that she knew not, because she did not see any countenance, nor could she tell anything but what she said, though she knew well it was He who spoke to her, and not the effect of fancy."

And so we come to the doubts and the torments that were to assail Teresa because of her mystical experiences. There had been several recent exposures in Spain of women who claimed supernatural favours, either by fraud or by self-deception, and these women had fallen into the hands of the Inquisition. Teresa's confessors were convinced that she was under a delusion, or ensnared by the devil. They imposed penances beyond her strength; they bid her resist with insolence the divine favours; they increased her natural tendency towards doubt.

"The devil," says poor Teresa, "has so many subtleties that he may easily put on the appearance of an angel of light." In her anguish of difficulty, she consulted two old friends of hers, one of them a priest. Although they were both "conspicuous for virtue and prayer," they did not hesitate to speak freely in the town of Teresa's private conversation with them, so that the revelations and visions of this nun at the Incarnation soon became the common talk of Avila. "They were not meant for everyone," writes Teresa, "and it seemed that I myself had published them." "Altogether," she adds, "people were so certain that I was under the influence of the devil, that some wished me to be exorcised. This, however, gave me very little trouble; but what I felt the most was, to see my confessors afraid of hearing my confessions, or when I came to know what tales were told to them about me."

Thus Teresa stood alone, face to face with some of the ultimate problems of the spiritual life. Were her visions true visions or false visions? Were they to be encouraged or resisted? How were they to be tested? What value did they possess? It is characteristic of Teresa that she should encounter these questions squarely, think them through and think them out; examine searchingly every stage of her spiritual growing.

She makes her investigation in a truly scientific spirit. Her sound common-sense tells her that false visions may be due to melancholy, or to health

weakened by penance or disease. They may be the effect of imagination ; or the product of thought-concentration. But, she argues, if visions result in stimulating with a new vitality body, mind and soul ; if they surpass all scope of imagination, all power of thought, we cannot possibly attribute their origin to our own limited faculties. " Like imperfect sleep," she says, " which, instead of giving more strength to the head, doth but leave it the more exhausted, the mere operation of the imagination is but to weaken the soul. Instead of nourishment and energy she reaps only disgust ; whereas a genuine heavenly vision yields to her a harvest of ineffable spiritual riches, and an admirable renewal of bodily strength." The true vision gives immediate apprehension of spiritual truth. " It was granted me to perceive in one instant how all things are seen and contained in God." The soul emerges from ecstasy, " full of health and admirably disposed for action." We might quote passage after passage, page after page, of Teresa's glowing prose to illustrate further the surpassing effects of her spiritual experiences ; but it is enough if we have made clear her one infallible test for true or false visions—" By their fruits ye shall know them." " If the favours and caresses come from our Lord let her (the soul) carefully observe whether she feel herself to be the better for them ; and if, from hearing more loving expressions, she do not become more humble and confounded, then let her be assured it is *not* the Spirit of God."

"Whether she feel herself to be the better for them." Not, note, to be the wiser. She says: "People imagine that to have 'revelations' implies exceptional holiness. It implies nothing of the kind. Holiness can only be arrived at by acts of virtue and by keeping the commandments."

It seems to us that Teresa has herself refuted that school of thinkers who urge that her experiences were merely hallucinations induced by states of body. It must be frankly admitted that as a girl she was subject to violent nervous pains and general paralysis. For four days she lay as one dead, her grave prepared; she would have been buried, had not her father insisted on delay. This is the "mystic death" spoken of in certain Lives of the saint; the suspension of the bodily faculties and the birth of a new life. Slowly, very slowly, with cruel anguish of body, Teresa recovered. It was years before she gained the entire use of her limbs, and during those years she was constantly sick and subject to fainting fits. The medical materialists therefore ascribe all her ecstasies, raptures and visions to hysteria and neurasthenia. It is, of course, true that "there is not a single one of our states of mind, high or low, healthy or morbid, that has not some organic process as its condition." "But," says Professor William James, "to plead the organic causation of a religious state of mind in refutation of its claim to possess superior spiritual value, is quite illogical and arbitrary, unless one have already worked out in advance some psycho-physical theory connecting spiritual values in general

with determinate sorts of physiological change. Otherwise none of our thoughts and feelings, not even our scientific doctrines, not even our *dis*-beliefs, could retain any value as revelations of the truth, for every one of them without exception flows from the state of their possessor's body at the time." It is even possible that the neurotic temperament might be more sensitive to vibrations from other planes; but in Teresa's case her whole life contradicts any assertion that she was unbalanced. Her life was disciplined and orderly; she had a remarkable capacity for affairs; her writings have a force, vigour and perspicacity, only to be achieved by one of powerful intellect. Her bodily activities in middle age and old age were excessive and arduous. She was anything but morbid—she was laughter-loving and cheerful. Cardinal Manning ascribes to her "the broad common-sense, calm judgment and balanced mind of a legislator or ruler." Further, she investigated all the facts of her experience capable of investigation with the most patient care. And that is why—as we said at the beginning—there is the temptation to regard her solely as "the psychologist among the saints." But to many this is the least part of her greatness, a greatness that cannot be measured by any human standard, for its height is beyond even the imagination of many ardent souls.

Or rather its depth; for the allegory that Teresa employs to convey the final consummation of her experience is a journey into the recesses of being. Underneath our waking consciousness there are deeps

below deeps, vast undiscovered realms of power and bliss, undeveloped spiritual riches of indescribable glory. This is the Interior Castle, the Castle of the Soul, made of "diamonds of most clear crystal, in which are many rooms, as in heaven there are many mansions." The seven stages of spiritual progress are symbolized by the seven rooms of the Castle. In the innermost room of all dwells what Teresa calls the "spirit of the soul," the divine spark, the ultimate essence, that may achieve union with the Godhead. Many there are who never care to penetrate into the Castle; its gates are Mental Prayer. Teresa treats of the Seven Mansions in full detail, arming and warning the aspirant, telling him how he shall open door after door by overcoming sin and practising prayer. As he travels deeper into the Castle, ever approaching closer to Reality, new faculties, undreamed of, unguessed at, unfold; consciousness expands; the stages of ecstasy and rapture are passed; and in the final attainment he enters the Seventh Mansion, and Creator and creature are one.

It is in the Seventh Mansion that the Spiritual Marriage takes place of which we have already spoken in connexion with Catherine of Siena. Teresa thus describes this surpassing experience: "All that I can speak of it," she says, "is that our Lord made known in one moment to the soul what is the glory of Heaven, in a manner far more sublime than can be expressed by any vision, or any other spiritual favour. If I may so express myself, that which may be called *the spirit of the soul* becomes one

truly with God. . . . Perhaps by these words: *He who is united to God is one spirit with him*, St Paul intended to describe that mystical marriage which unites the soul inseparably with God. . . . The soul which has attained to this state never departs from that centre, where she is at rest with God; neither is her peace ever disturbed, for she receives it from Him who gave it to the apostles when they were gathered together in His name."

Thus in the attainment of the Seventh Mansion, of the Spiritual Marriage, life has come full circle; it is complete; accepted in its entirety. The whole being has achieved synthesis, works in harmony, reposes in full certitude of the Eternal Love and Wisdom.

In Monsieur Henri Delacroix's admirable "Etude d'histoire et de psychologie du Mysticisme," he treats with illumination the difficult question of Transcendence and Immanence in connexion with Teresa's attainment of the Seventh Mansion. Speaking of God, he says: "Sa presence de rare est devenue continue; sa transcendence que l'extase faisait parfois immanente et que la peine extatique montrait transcendente dans l'immanence même, est devenue immanence; il a pris possession de tous les états de l'ame, et toute la précision de la vie extérieure semble jaillir de l'imprécision du Dieu interieur."

Yet the outcome of the final consummation is, for Teresa, not passivity, not absorption, but activity. "In the design of God," she says, "this Spiritual Marriage is destined to no other purpose but the

incessant production of work, work." It is time, therefore, to leave these transcendental regions and return once more to common earth ; time to exchange the light of vision for the light of day ; time to follow Teresa, no longer amid the gleaming intricacies of the Interior Castle, but along the rutted roads of old Spain.

The Reform

Teresa looked out on her immediate surroundings and it seemed to her that they were bad. The nuns had vowed themselves to prayer and to God ; but on all sides the exterior world, with its distractions, its temptations, its dangers, was breaking through upon the cloister. She looked farther afield and she saw great masses of people, great nations, forswearing their allegiance to the Church, and, as she believed, rushing headlong to hell. To her there appeared to be one sovereign remedy for both evils : the reform of the Religious Orders. The Religious Orders were God's regular soldiers. It was small wonder that the enemy should triumph if God's army were lax in discipline, indifferent, demoralized, the sentinels asleep at their posts. She realized to the full the justice of the taunts levelled against monastic life—no one had been more frank than herself in recognizing its present scandals. She believed that by purifying the cloister a great spiritual bulwark might be erected that would establish the Church's position against all opponents. The reproach of evil living and evil example within the fold would be

removed ; an undivided front, strong in the trust of God, would be presented to the world, and the tide of heresy stemmed. Ignatius Loyola, and St Peter of Alcantara, reformer of the Franciscan Order, held a like opinion. They felt with Teresa that the supreme need of the Church at that moment was a band of devoted men and women, willing to sacrifice all in her service.

Nevertheless, the actual suggestion of a reform came to Teresa almost by accident. It was in 1560, when she was forty-five years old. One evening there were gathered in her cell a few intimate friends and relatives ; all were, of course, nuns of the Incarnation, and all had experienced the difficulty of leading the religious life in that easy-going, over-crowded convent. One of Teresa's young nieces exclaimed with sudden earnestness: "Well, let us who are here betake us to a different and more solitary way of life—like hermits." She promised further to give a thousand ducats of her own property towards the foundation of a small house of stricter rule, so that the idea became immediately practicable.

It was only a random suggestion, but it struck deep. The more Teresa brooded over the thought the more she felt it to have been divinely inspired. She considered ways and means. It seemed to her that God would be best served by a small community consisting only of twelve nuns and a prioress, who should return to the primitive rule of the Carmelite Order. She anticipated opposition to the scheme from

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From the contemporary portrait by Fra Juan de la Miseria at Seville

her own Prioress at the Incarnation, and made her plans with extreme caution. The Provincial of the order gave her permission for the new foundation. A lady of Avila, a widow, in whom Teresa found an enthusiastic ally, bought a little house in a good part of the town, as if for herself. This was destined for the new convent of St Joseph, for whom Teresa had a special devotion.

But though Teresa had anticipated difficulties, she was unprepared for the extremes of hostility aroused by the project when it became known. The nuns of the Incarnation were indignant at the implied aspersion on their way of life. The townsfolk laughed at the idea as ridiculous. "There instantly arose such a violent persecution as cannot be described in words," says Teresa, "the scoffs, the jeers, the laughter, the exclamations that it was a difficult and silly undertaking were more than I can describe." So great was the tumult that the Provincial actually withdrew the permission he had given to found the new convent.

Opposition always had the effect of stimulating Teresa to pursue with more undaunted courage the course she had in view. It rallied her energies; it increased her activity. "I am filled with desires to serve God so impetuous," she writes, "and am so full of trouble at finding myself so useless to His glory, that I can give no idea of their intensity." She enlisted the Dominicans on her behalf, and they promised to obtain for her a brief from Rome. They suggested further, in order to overcome the

difficulty with her own Provincial, that the convent should be placed under the control of the Bishop of Avila.

It was Teresa's urgent ambition not to endow her convent but to found in poverty. This, she learned afterwards, was the practice of the primitive Carmelites, but it was one of the points on which she encountered most bitter opposition. We have already seen how loth the popes were, even in the thirteenth century, to grant to Clare the privilege of poverty; three centuries later they were still more hostile to unendowed foundations. On this point Teresa consulted St Peter of Alcantara. He passes before our eyes vividly in Teresa's pages, a hundred and one years old, his body gnarled by incredible asceticism. "He seemed made of roots of trees more than anything else," writes Teresa; and she adds: "With all his sanctity he was very kind." He had previously approved her methods of prayer which she had submitted to him, and now he approved her intention of founding in poverty. The house was prepared; the brief from Rome obtained; the Bishop of Avila accepted the foundation; in 1562 four novices with Teresa took the vows; and the convent of St Joseph, the first house of the Reformed Rule, was in being.

Scarcely had the incense melted into air than Teresa fell a prey to paroxysms of doubt. She questioned as to whether she had been wise to disobey her Provincial; she was exercised as to whether the Rule were not too rigid for human following. The turn of events did little to quiet her perplexities,

for on the very day of the foundation she was commanded by her immediate superior to return to the Incarnation. She obeyed, leaving her four novices without a mother. And next the Governor of Avila went in person to St Joseph's, and commanded the novices to depart immediately, threatening to break down the doors and drag them out by main force if they disobeyed. The novices, with splendid courage, replied that their superior was the Bishop and not the Governor, and refused to stir. The Governor dared not fulfil his threats, but he raised the full powers of the town, municipal and ecclesiastic, against the little community of nuns. A most imposing council was summoned, consisting of the Governor and council of the city, the municipality and representatives of the people, the cathedral chapter, bishops, vicar-general, and delegates from each of the religious orders. Certainly it was a formidable phalanx of power and talent to oppose to these four women. The Governor pointed out that the town was already thickly studded with convents and monasteries; to found another was to impose a tax on the people, to take money from the pockets of the citizens and food from their mouths. "It is impossible to allow a few poor servants of God to die of hunger," he said magniloquently, "and we shall have to deprive our children of bread." But the part of his speech that interests us most bears reference to Teresa's visions. His attitude is delightfully typical of the conservative potentate all the world over. . . . "They say that this nun has revelations, and a very strange spirit.

This of itself makes one fear, and should make the least cautious ponder; for in these times we have seen women's deceptions and illusions, and at all times it has been dangerous to applaud the novelties to which they were inclined." To add to the difficulties of St Joseph's Convent, Teresa had infringed the civil law by founding without obtaining permission from the civil authorities, and without receiving the sanction of the older foundations. She was now threatened with an expensive lawsuit with the municipality, and was virtually a prisoner in the Convent of the Incarnation.

During these months of enforced inaction and deep anxiety, amid the occupations of the house, the kitchen and the spinning-wheel, Teresa began the first narrative of her life, 1562.

It was two years before the city finally abandoned its opposition; but after six months Teresa was allowed to return to St Joseph's.

The five years that she spent there, were, she tells us, the most quiet years of her life—" the tranquillity and calmness of that happy time my soul has often since longed for." The house was small, with a small but neat chapel; there was neither a common workroom nor a common dormitory. Little hermitages were erected in the garden for meditation. The day was portioned out between work and prayer. The nuns rose at six; until eight in summer and nine in winter they were occupied in prayer and repeating the offices. As to the hour of the meal, it was left unsettled, as it depended on whether there was any-

thing to eat. The food of the nuns, if they were not reduced to dry bread only, consisted of a little coarse fish or bread and cheese. During the time of recreation which followed they might converse with each other as they pleased ; then the convent was buried in silence while some slept and some prayed. On the stroke of two, Vespers were said, and were succeeded by an hour's reading. Compline was at six in summer and five in winter, and at eight the bell rang for silence unbroken till after Prime on the following day. Matins were said about nine ; and at eleven the nuns went to bed. The nuns' habits were of black serge with a cape and scapulary of white woollen serge ; the coifs were of coarse flax cloth, the tunics of woollen serge ; on their feet the nuns wore hemp-soled sandals.

The Rule was a strict one, but, as we shall see, not nearly so strict as that imposed by the Mère Angélique. Teresa's transcendent experiences had brought her a large humanity, a deep measure of sympathy ; her whole nature was radiant and vital, and the unnecessary austerities, the fierce self-repression practised at Port-Royal would not, we think, have met with Teresa's approval.

Teresa was never weary of reminding her nuns that " God walks even among the pots and pipkins." She says : " The true proficiency of the soul consists, not in much thinking, but in much loving. And if you ask me how this love must be acquired, I answer : by resolving to do the divine will, and to suffer for God, and by so doing and so suffering,

when occasion for action and for suffering arise. . . . Courage, then, my daughters, let there be no sadness ! When obedience calls you to exterior employments (as for example into the kitchen amidst the pots and dishes) remember that our Lord goes along with you, to help you both in your interior and exterior duties."

The quiet of Teresa's life at St Joseph's was broken in upon by a command from the Father-General of her order to found other houses of the primitive Rule. In the fifteen years that remained to her, she founded thirty monasteries for women and two for men. In order to accomplish her end, she had to take long journeys over Spain, to encounter the dangers of the road, of floods, of broken bridges, to submit to the discomfort of inns, to be the object of opposition and persecution, and to be threatened with processes and lawsuits. She had, moreover, to learn something of the laws of inheritance and finance, of the fluctuations of the property-market ; she had to be a keen judge of men and to acquire a sharp insight into affairs ; she had to fight local jealousies and rival jurisdictions. " Since our Lord has employed me in the foundation of these houses," she writes to her brother, " I have become such a woman of business that I know a little of everything."

She used to travel in a covered cart without springs ; six nuns usually accompanied her, and also a priest. During the journey the nuns followed exactly the exercises of the community ; a little bell marked the beginning and the end of each.

Silence was kept at the appointed hour. It may well be imagined that this mode of progress was not always agreeable. "I assure you, sisters," writes Teresa, "that as the sun fell upon the carts, to enter them was like being in purgatory."

The thrilling adventures that befell her on these travels, the separate obstacles she encountered and overcame, the variety of characters she had to deal with and of experience she had to acquire—all this may be read in her own "Book of Foundations." Her spirit was indomitable, her will unconquerable. To give some idea of the kind of difficulties that met her, let us quote from her own account of her second foundation—made at Medina del Campo, 1567. "We arrived at Medina on the Eve of the Assumption about midnight," she writes, "and, to avoid all disturbance, we alighted at the monastery of St Anne, and thence went on foot to our house. It was a great mercy of God, that at such an hour we met no one, though it was the time when the bulls were brought into Medina for a bull-fight on the following day. Having come to the house, we entered into a court, the walls of which seemed much decayed, as I saw more plainly afterwards when it was daylight. It seems to me that our Lord was pleased this good father (Father Antony) should be so blind as not to perceive there was no proper place there for the Blessed Sacrament. When I saw the hall, I perceived there was much rubbish to be removed, and that the walls were not plastered: the night was far advanced and we had only brought a few hang-

ings (three, I think) which were nothing for the whole length of the hall. . . ." They were, however, able to procure from a lady several pieces of tapestry and a piece of blue damask. "We knew not what to do for nails, and that was not the time to buy them. We began, however, to search for some on the walls, and at length with difficulty we procured abundance; and then some of the men began putting up the tapestry while we swept the floor; and we made such great haste that by break of day the altar was ready, a bell was put up, and immediately Mass was said. This was sufficient for taking possession; but we did not rest contented till we had the most Blessed Sacrament placed in the tabernacle. . . . When Mass was over, I chanced to look out into the court from a window, and saw all the wall in many places quite in ruins, to repair which would require the work of many days."

To work all night after a long journey, and find yourself by daylight in a ruin was one of the least of the trials Teresa had to encounter. Sometimes she founded in poverty, and she and her nuns suffered from hunger and intense cold and were devoid of the barest necessities of life; sometimes she founded with endowments, and could not obtain the moneys left under wills, or given as dowries to her novices. We have here only space to speak in detail of one more of her foundations, the one that included her most famous disciple, whose mystical works rival hers in the estimation of the world—the foundation at Durvelo, where the

Primitive Rule was practised by Father Antony of Jesus and St John of the Cross.

At first Teresa could not find any friars anxious to join the Reform. "Here was a poor barefooted nun, without anyone to help her but our Lord," she writes, "furnished with plenty of letters patent and good desires, without any possibility of putting them in execution." When she was at Medina she spoke on this subject to Father Antony, Superior of the Convent of St Anne, whom she had known when he was Prior of the Carmes at Avila. Father Antony was then sixty years old, a man of handsome and commanding presence and noble stature, somewhat delicate in health. To Teresa's amazement, indeed to her dismay, he offered himself as the first friar to profess her Primitive Rule. Teresa could not at first believe him in earnest; when he persisted, she felt that this man, no longer young, accustomed to command, was not the right person to start so rigorous an undertaking. Her scruples were only too well founded; but Antony's enthusiasm overbore her judgment. Her next volunteer was John of the Cross, whose insignificant appearance led her to speak in loving satire of these two brothers as "her friar and a half."

A young gentleman of Avila offered for the use of the friars of the Reform a house he possessed in a little village called Durvelo. This poverty-stricken place consisted of some twenty cottages, and Teresa gives a vivid picture of her first impression of the house. "We arrived there a little before night,

and when we entered the house it was in such a state that we dared not remain there during the night, because the place was so exceedingly dirty and there were also many reapers about. It had a tolerable hall, one chamber, with a garret and a little kitchen ; this building was all that was to compose our convent." Partly—we cannot help feeling—with a view to dissuading Father Antony from his purpose, she wrote to him describing the house as little better than a barn for storing grain, dwelling without extenuation on its mud-walls and miserable surroundings. "God had inspired him with more valour than he had me, and so he answered that not only there would he dwell, but even in a pigsty. Brother John of the Cross was of the same mind."

At Valladolid Teresa instructed John in the Rule of life she had set before herself and her daughters, and in 1568 John assumed the habit of the Primitive Order and took up his abode at Durvelo. For two months he remained there in absolute solitude ; then he was joined by Father Antony, who renounced his office of Superior, and embraced the Reform. Teresa visited her disciples, and describes how John had adorned the walls with skulls and had made wooden crosses out of the branches of trees ; she tells of the little cold, uncomfortable hermitages that the friars had constructed on either side of the church, and of the extreme penances they practised. She showed herself here, as always, keenly alive to the dangers of excessive asceticism, and took every step in her power to abate the unwise zeal of her early

disciples. As the community increased, she bade her friars wear sandals ; "as to the point on which I strongly insisted with our father, it was that he should see they were not stinted of food. . . . The other thing that I besought him greatly is that he would appoint the work, even if it were only making baskets, or whatever else, and that during the hour of recreation when there is no other time ; for it is a matter of extreme importance, where there is no study ; know, my father, that I am in favour of exacting much in the way of virtue, but not in rigour, as you will see by these our houses."

But St John was one of those ardent souls to whom moderation is impossible. The walls of Durvelo still stand ; by a rough ladder we may still reach the loft where John penetrated into the profundities of mysticism. The writings he has left are very different to those of St Teresa ; his has been the more sombre and the more terrible experience, and he has spoken with an understanding equalled by no other writer of that stage of mysticism which is known as *the Dark Night of the Soul*—the moment when, after deep bliss, the soul feels itself abandoned of God ; the moment identified by some with Christ's cry on the cross : "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ?" More definitely than St Teresa he takes what is called the negative path : "We arrive at God only by the negation of what is not God." On the way to purification there are two experiences to pass through which involve cruel suffering. The Night of the Senses is

the first, when the lower desires are killed out ; the Night of the Soul is the second, when the soul is thrown back upon itself in its nakedness, and deprived of all comfort and joy, so that it may learn to stand alone.

But if the mystic path was dark to St John of the Cross, no one has revealed with more perfect restraint and loveliness the bliss of the journey's ending. We venture to quote part of Arthur Symons' beautiful translation of St John's poem :

"Upon an obscure night,
Fevered with love in love's anxiety,
(O hapless-happy plight !)
I went, none seeing me,
Forth from my house where all things quiet be . . .

Blest night of wandering
In secret, when by none might I be spied,
Nor I see anything ;
Without a light or guide,
Save that which in my heart burnt in my side.

That light did lead me on
More surely than the shining of noontide,
Where well I knew that One
Did for my coming bide ;
Where he abode might none but he abide:

O night that didst lead thus,
O night more lovely than the dawn of light,
O night that broughtest us
Lover to lover's sight,
Lover with loved, in marriage of delight ! . . . "

When St John was seized by the Inquisition he destroyed the letters that had passed between him-

self and St Teresa—letters which would, no doubt, have thrown light upon many profundities. But before his incarceration, John was for four years confessor to the nuns of the Incarnation, called to this post by Teresa, who from 1571 to 1574 was Prioress of this convent. Her installation is perhaps one of the most dramatic episodes in her career.

The Convent of the Incarnation had fallen upon evil days. Its finances had been badly managed, and the nuns often lacked food. It was seriously proposed to send the sisters back to their families and to dissolve the community. In this dilemma the Visitor of the convent bethought him of Teresa's extraordinary practical abilities. If anyone could bring the affairs of the house into order, it would be this woman of experience and business capacity. So, with the consent of the superiors of the order, the Visitor nominated Teresa Prioress. The nuns were justly incensed—justly, because it was their right to elect a prioress, and their choice would never have fallen upon Teresa. Many of them had not forgiven her for the slur they deemed she had cast upon their way of life by founding houses of stricter rule ; many feared that she would impose upon the Incarnation rigours and severities such as they had never undertaken to bear.

In 1571 the Father Provincial read before the nuns assembled in chapter Teresa's patent of election. An indescribable uproar followed. One nun cried out : " We love her, we choose her ! " and, raising

the processional cross, went forth to meet the new Prioress. The vast majority of nuns resisted the entrance of Teresa, and the Father Provincial had to drag her by main force within the enclosure. Teresa's few supporters began to chant the *Te Deum*, but angry shouts and imprecations overbore the sound of their singing.

No incident in Teresa's career shows more clearly her marvellous skill in dealing with a difficult, almost an impossible, situation, her exquisite tact, and, above all, her knowledge of human nature. When the nuns entered the chapter-room for Teresa's first chapter, they found in the place of the Prioress a statue of the Virgin, holding in her hands the key of the convent. Teresa sat on a low stool at the foot of the statue. Here is a summary of her address :

" My ladies, mothers and sisters, by the obedience which I owe to my superiors, our Lord has been pleased to send me back to this house to exercise the office of Prioress. . . . I was grieved at my election, because a charge was thus given to me, the duties of which I am unequal to fulfil ; and also because you have been deprived of the right of election which belongs to you, so that a Prioress has been imposed upon you against your will and pleasure—a Prioress, too, who would think she had done great things could she only learn from the least amongst you the virtues which are practised in this house. I come to serve and please you in every way. . . . You must then, my dear mothers

and sisters, let me know what I can do for each of you, for I shall be most willing to do what you ask, even were it to shed my blood for you. I am a daughter of this house, and your sister. I know the disposition and wants of all the Religious here, or at least of the greater part of them. You have no reason, then, to fear being under the government of one who is wholly yours by so many titles. . . ."

Teresa won all hearts at once, and so completely, that at the next election of a prioress fifty-five nuns actually underwent excommunication for casting their votes in her favour.

But before we examine the reasons why the superiors who forced Teresa upon the Incarnation, should, at the next election, excommunicate those who supported her claims, we will touch for a moment on the scene in which Teresa experienced, perhaps, her greatest popular triumph. The foundation at Seville took place in 1575, and we quote Mrs Cunningham Graham's picturesque account of the proceedings:

"From every narrow casement, so dark and mysterious with its stern gratings of twisted iron, hung gorgeous velvets and silks. Down below passed the great Archbishop bearing the Host, under the pall of cloth of gold and silver borne by cathedral dignitaries, sweeping from light into shadow; followed by pursy canons, their shoulders bending under the weight of broidered copes stiff

with Gothic embroidery. Then came brotherhoods and confraternities in their diverse coloured robes and insignia ; choir-boys and acolytes, scarlet robes and lace stoles dazzling in the sun ; torches gleamed, censers swung, minstrels filled the air with triumphant music, banners waved." Mrs Cunningham Graham then describes, " that most moving scene of all, when the saint, in the rear of the procession, throwing herself down on her knees before the Archbishop, implored his blessing, and he, never surely greater than in that moment, fell on his knees likewise, humbly imploring hers."

Yet in that very year (1575) the opposition to Teresa's Reform began to make itself felt.

St Joseph's of Avila was founded in 1562—from 1567 to 1575 Teresa's foundations were continual, and conspicuous throughout the country for the purity and sanctity of the life they fostered. All the nobler souls in the Carmelite communities following the Mitigated Rule, the men and women of highest aspiration and sincerest aim, began to be attracted out of their houses to join the Primitive Rule. At first the defection was imperceptible ; but as the foundations multiplied the Carmelites suddenly realized that the best of their sons and daughters were deserting the old order. In the houses of the Mitigated Rule, resentment against the reform turned to violent opposition, and finally to active persecution.

We have already described the scene when Teresa

was elected Prioress of the Incarnation. We must tell what happened when the time for the next election came round. We will give Teresa's own words. The Prior of the Mitigated Carmes came to preside at the election of the Prioress: "He threatened the Religious who should give me their votes with excommunication," Teresa writes. "Nevertheless, undismayed by his threats, fifty-five Religious voted for me as if he had never said a word. As the Provincial received each separate suffrage, he poured forth his malediction on the Religious who presented it, and declaring her excommunicated, he struck the paper with his fist, tore it, and threw it into the fire. The nuns have been excommunicated now for nearly a fortnight; they cannot hear Mass, nor enter the choir during office, nor speak to anyone, even their confessor or relations." The Prioress elected by the remaining forty-four nuns was, in deference to Teresa's advice, finally accepted by the whole community.

St John of the Cross, confessor of the Incarnation, was violently seized and thrown into prison. But the persecution was not confined to the Convent of the Incarnation; the Vicar-General of the Carmelite Order ordered the submission of all the members of the Reform, to the Superiors of the Mitigated Rule. Further, the nuns of the Reform were denounced to the Inquisition; Teresa herself was bidden to choose some convent as a retreat, and never to quit it on any pretext whatsoever. The Papal Nuncio, writing in 1578, speaks of Teresa

as "that restless, roving, contumacious female, who under the cover of devotion invents evil doctrine; leaving the retirement of the cloister to gad about against the orders of the council of Trent and her superiors; teaching as if she were a master, against the teachings of St Paul, who ordered that women should not teach."

Although the austere Philip II. favoured the Reform, the Pope, the Vicar-General, and the great Order of Carmelites were ranged against it. Teresa alone—so great was her wisdom and knowledge—could possibly have met even this powerful combination, but her allies within the Primitive Rule were a source rather of weakness than of strength. The three chief fathers of the Reform were curiously lacking in the gifts of diplomacy and government. Father Gratian was weak; Father Mariano harsh; Father Antony, her first friar, obstinate. They committed a very grave tactical error when they insisted on holding a chapter in order to erect themselves into a separate Province. Teresa did all she could to prevent this step; yet even when discussing matters of such gravity, her buoyant spirit enabled her to adopt a bantering tone with her friars. To Father Gratian she writes: "My father and *superior*, as you say—I cannot help laughing whenever I think of your letter, at the serious way in which you remind me that I am not to judge my superior. Oh, my dear father, you have little occasion to swear like a saint, far less *like a waggoner*, for I am perfectly convinced of this." But in spite of her efforts, the fathers held

the chapter, elected Father Antony Provincial, and so called down upon their heads the wrath of the Papal Nuncio, who annulled the acts of the chapter, excommunicated Antony, Gratian and Mariano, and imprisoned them in three separate monasteries at Madrid.

Teresa, however, lived to see her Reform established on what appeared a sound basis. Her friars had tried to snatch illegitimately at independence ; she secured the recognition of her foundation as a separate Order by a brief from Rome in 1580. Henceforward, convents of the Reformed Rule were an entirely separate organization from convents of the Mitigated Rule, having their own Provincial, and managing, without interference, their own internal affairs.

Teresa died at Alva in 1582; but even during her lifetime the Reform had passed through its first brief glory, and was beginning to show signs of decay. St Joseph's of Avila, her first foundation, where she had passed the five happiest years of her life, soon fell away from its ideals of perfection. It became involved in money troubles ; the nuns petitioned to eat meat, and asked to be allowed to keep something to eat in their cells. We cannot know how bitter this backsliding was to the soul of Teresa. Some say that her humour, her sanity, her knowledge of human nature, helped her to preserve that tranquillity which was a striking feature of her life : others say that she drew her strength from an unquenchable fountain.

It has been our endeavour in this chapter merely to indicate the vast scope of her activities—activities

which embraced the smallest details of life. Nothing is too minute, too trivial for the attention of this "undaunted daughter of desires." To Lorenzo, her brother, she writes: "I send you some quinces, so that your housekeeper may make them into conserves for you, to eat after meals, and a box of marmalade, and another for the Sub-Prioress of St Joseph's, who, they tell me, is very thin. Tell her she is to eat it."

In order to express Teresa in a phrase, we have to go to one of her own "large books of day." In the Interior Castle, when the soul has passed beyond Ecstasy, beyond Rapture, when it has entered the Seventh Mansion and reached the final consummation, Teresa writes: "To give to our Lord a perfect hospitality, Mary and Martha must combine." This is the summary of Teresa's life.

THE MÈRE ANGÉLIQUE

The Shell of Dogma

WE have a curious story to unfold in the following pages, a story of unflinching heroism, a story of tragedy, a story possessing many unique features, bristling with contradictions. The core of our subject is the convent of Port-Royal and its reform by its heroic abbess, the Mère Angélique. But the Mère Angélique was more than a great reformer; her convent acted, to men as well as to women, as a magnet of religious life, and outside the house of peace and prayer a band of solitaries built themselves dwellings—men of position, renown, intellect, who, bound by no vows and attached to no order, chose to live a strict life of asceticism and study.

Our innermost kernel is thus the cloister; it is encircled by a community of recluses, and these are driven by unforeseen circumstances to erect round Port-Royal a hard outer shell of doctrine. This doctrine is known as Jansenism, and claims as its basis the writings of St Augustine.

In these chapters we have to deal with a side of Christian teaching differing from any so far touched upon in these pages. Catherine of Siena has laid her chief stress upon Love; Juliana of Norwich upon Joy;

Teresa upon Prayer; Clare upon Poverty. The Port-Royalists dwell upon the more terrible aspect of the Deity: His Power, His right to make or mar as He chooses. Man is fallen and lost; all his unaided efforts are unavailing; by the Grace of God alone may he find salvation. It is an iron creed, demanding the extreme of self-renunciation and penance; a creed that often tends to obscure the Love and Mercy of God and to extinguish hope. The Port-Royal nuns under the Mère Angélique lived out this creed with heartwhole devotion, and the Port-Royal recluses defended it with an array of sounding logic, of caustic wit, of dogged persistence, that made the recurring question of Grace as vital in the seventeenth century as it had ever been throughout the ages.

This ancient controversy concerning Grace—so acrid a controversy that several papal bulls had forbidden its discussion—was finally to bring about the ruin of Port-Royal; but for a long time the nuns remained immune to the theological disputes that centred about their way of life. The round of recollection, of penance and prayer went on without interruption, while there beat up against the very convent walls a tide of fierce battle. Before approaching the citadel, however, it seems to us well to describe the outworks, to indicate as briefly as possible the dogmas held by the Port-Royal recluses, and to show how these dogmas incited the enmity of the Jesuits, and procured the condemnation of the Holy See.

Our prologue opens with two young men, playing, with admirable skill, battledore and shuttlecock.

The emphasis is laid upon the game, because, for five years, it was the only relaxation, practically the only exercise, that these students allowed themselves. One is a Frenchman, and one a Fleming. In the Fleming, thin, bony-visaged, aquiline-nosed, with keen glance and fierce moustache, we recognize Jansen ; his friend and host, insignificant in appearance, with crumpled features, is known in history by the rank he afterwards attained as Abbot of Saint-Cyran. After the Mère Angélique, he is the dominating figure in the story of Port-Royal.

These two young men had been fellow-students in Paris; but in Paris, theology was based upon the writings of the schoolmen. Jansen and Saint-Cyran believed that the schoolmen had obscured the pure doctrine of the Church fathers, and they determined to make a systematic study of these earlier sources, particularly of St Augustine. Saint-Cyran asked Jansen to come and stay with him at his house near Bayonne, and for five years, from 1611 to 1616, these students pursued their researches with unremitting zeal. Jansen hardly ever left the arm-chair in which he studied, and where he would sometimes snatch a few hours' fitful sleep. "You will kill this poor Fleming with hard work," Saint-Cyran's mother used to say.

Jansen's study of St Augustine, passionate, intense, devoted, was pursued throughout a lifetime with untiring enthusiasm. He read the complete works of the Father ten times ; those relating to the Pelagian controversy thirty times. Pelagius was the great

upholder of the doctrine of Free Will ; his heresy lay in denying, at least partially, the necessity for Grace. St Augustine, in refuting this heresy, had made himself the chief exponent of the efficacy of Grace ; and consequently of Election and Predestination. But his teachings had at various times been so mitigated and softened by popes and councils that, according to existing standards, Jansen found they actually savoured of heresy ! He conveyed this extraordinary situation to Saint-Cyran in the following words :— " There is not a single person to whom I can venture to say what I think (and my judgment is formed in accordance with the principles established by Saint Augustine) of the opinions held at the present time on most points, and especially on Grace and Predestination, for I am afraid lest at Rome they should treat me as they have done others." As a matter of fact, the doctrines found by Jansen in St Augustine bore strong resemblance to those held by the Calvinists on the question of Election and Predestination. And the Jansenists were actually accused of Calvinism ; they have been called by Isaac d'Israeli " the Methodists of France." But these statements have no foundation : the Jansenists held the strict Roman Catholic view of the Eucharist and of the Sacrament of Penance, and they believed that salvation was only to be found within the Roman fold. They went indeed further than the practice of the Church in their doctrine of penance, and maintained that absolution should not be granted unless there was an inward change amounting almost to conversion. This was

THE ABBÉ DE SAINT-CYRAN

From an engraving after the portrait by Philippe de Champagne

expounded by the great Arnauld in his book, "De la Frequente Communion" (1643)—a book that brought upon him the enmity of the Jesuits, for this community sought to win sinners without putting too great demands upon the frailty of human nature, and they maintained that Arnauld strove to make the communion-table inaccessible, and to deny to the faithful the Bread of Life. In consequence of this book, there were said to be three thousand fewer communicants at the Church of St Sulpice at Eastertime. But this is to anticipate; Jansen himself lived and died within the Church of Rome; from 1635 to 1638 he was Bishop of Yprès. His monumental Latin work, the "Augustinus," was not published till 1640, two years after his death.

Few books have been the centre of fiercer religious controversy, and yet nothing could have appeared more orthodox in design. The work consists of a series of texts of St Augustine, arranged so as to form a complete system. Jansen treats in full detail the condition of man prior to the Fall. He deals with the heresy of Pelagius, of his disciples and of the Semi-Pelagians; he discusses all the different kinds of Grace. He cites chapter and verse to prove that the doctrines he expounds emanate from St Augustine. The book is the result of an acute intellect and unsparing work. Saint-Cyran said that after St Paul and St Augustine, no one had spoken as divinely as Jansen on the subject of Grace.

It was not possible for the Holy See to condemn, as a whole, this book, claiming to derive its authority

from St Augustine; so the ingenious device was resorted to of extracting from it five propositions as heretical. These were condemned by a bull of Pope Innocent X. (1653). The first of these, and the most important, was said to be blasphemous as well as heretical. It ran as follows:—

"Some commandments of God are impossible for the just to obey, however much they desire it, and whatever efforts they make, because their strength is not sufficient; and they lack that Grace which alone would make obedience possible."

The Church denied that the doctrines of Jansen were to be found in St Augustine; the Jansenists denied that the propositions condemned by papal bull were to be found in the "Augustinus." Louis XIV. asked his favourite, the Count de Grammont, to read Jansen's book and see if he could discover the celebrated propositions. To the delight of the French Court, the Count stated that if the propositions were there, they were there *incognito*. Pascal, in his "Lettres Provinciales," engages in this question with dainty and mordant irony.

"MONSIEUR,—Nous étions bien abusés. Je ne suis détrompé que d'hier; jusque-là, j'ai pensé que le sujet des disputes de Sorbonne étoit bien important et d'une extrême conséquence pour la religion. . . . On examine deux questions; l'une de fait, l'autre de droit.

" Celle de fait consiste à savoir si Monsieur Arnauld est téméraire pour avoir dit dans sa seconde lettre, ' Qu'il a lu exactement le livre de Jansénius, et qu'il n'y a point trouvé les propositions condamnées par le feu pape ; et néanmoins que, comme il condamne ses propositions en quelque lieu qu'elles se rencontrent, il les condamne dans Jansénius, si elles y sont.'

" La question sur cela est de savoir s'il a pu, sans témérité, témoigner, par là qu'il doute que ces propositions soient de Jansénius, après que Messieurs les Evêques ont déclaré qu'elles sont de lui."

He proceeds in like vein to satirize the triviality of his opponents' arguments, and the light infantry of the " Lettres Provinciales " penetrated into spots which the heavy cavalry of Arnauld's charges failed to reach. Only five of the " Lettres Provinciales " dealt with the question of Jansenism ; the other thirteen were direct attacks upon the Jesuits.

But though Pascal employed in these controversial letters the indifferent tone of a man of the world, a light and airy wit and a biting irony, he, in common with the other recluses of Port-Royal, pursued the narrow way with an unswerving intensity of purpose that made ruthless sacrifice of all that ordinary humanity holds dear. Pascal did not join Port-Royal till 1655, twelve years after the death of Saint-Cyran ; but the influence of that remarkable man was so worked into the convent that it retained his impress till the very death. Nearly seventy

years after Saint-Cyran was in the grave, twenty-two old and feeble nuns still remained at Port-Royal. Isolated, excommunicated, many of them paralytic and dying, they refused absolutely to abandon the faith that their predecessors had learned from Saint-Cyran ; and they were dispersed with every circumstance of cruelty. It was chiefly the connexion of Saint-Cyran with Port-Royal that made it famous. It was this connexion that brought about its ruin.

We have already touched upon the friendship between Saint-Cryan and Jansen : their long community of study and doctrine. Jansen, who did not hesitate to push his creed to its extreme limits —he accepted the doctrine that still-born infants are condemned for eternity to hell-flame—seems only to have had one tenderness, his affection for his friend. Saint-Cyran was as hard, as rigid in doctrine as Jansen, but he desired with a passionate intensity the salvation of every individual human soul. He was ruthless in his methods of achieving this supreme goal ; he would admit of no hesitation, no compromise ; he demanded the complete and absolute surrender of self. Yet Saint-Cyran was no tyrannical director, imposing his will upon those who had placed themselves under his guidance. It was not dependence on man that he desired to foster, but dependence on God ; not submission to man, but growth in God. His insight into human character was amazing ; he probed its depths with unfailing penetration and sympathy. This great doctor of

souls had for each individual case a different treatment, a different remedy to be pursued with infinite patience and complete thoroughness. "It is a great mistake to guide all souls alike," he wrote to Marie-Claire, Angélique's sister, "each soul must have its own rules. Many things may be done without danger by the innocent which would be most dangerous for those who are wounded by sin; for although they are healed by repentance they are not exempt from the weakness which their wounds have left."

This discrimination in guidance accounts, no doubt, for the ascendancy obtained by Saint-Cyran over characters so different in type. The most brilliant men of the age owned his sway; the most timid women of the cloister sought his direction. It was not, however, accident that made Port-Royal the instrument of his views. The life led by the reformed nuns was based on the principles underlying his creed; the inherent sinfulness of man; salvation by the Grace of God alone. The Mère Angélique found in him the complement of herself, the ideal director; he found in Port-Royal the exact conditions he sought, to clothe his faith in flesh and blood. Jansenism, says Sainte-Beuve, is principally an affair of theology; therefore we are bound to emphasize the fact that Saint-Cyran in his direction was concerned almost entirely with its spiritual side. The young soldier convert, de Sericourt, once asked Saint-Cyran for a method of prayer. "Monsieur de Saint-Cyran replied more

by gesture than by speech. Joining his hands lightly, inclining his head a little, and raising his eyes towards God, he answered : ' We need only this, monsieur. It is enough that we should remain humbly in the presence of God, being only too favoured if He regards us.' " "Prayer," he wrote on another occasion, "is the channel that unites the heart of a Religious to that of God, which is his Spirit. It is by this that she may draw the waters of Heaven, which rise and descend from us to God, and from God to us by means of this spiritual channel, which is prayer. All that is done in religion, even eating and sleeping, is prayer, when we do it simply in the order required of us, without adding or taking away by our caprice and vain whims. . . . It is only necessary that in simplicity without attempting any violent mental effort, we hold ourselves before Him with the desire of love in our whole soul, and without other voluntary thought, and then all the time we are on our knees will be held as prayer before God, who accepts the humble endurance of involuntary distractions as freely as the finest aspirations we can formulate."

The bitter controversies that have centred round Port-Royal have sometimes obscured the deep spiritual life led by the nuns and recluses. Indeed, it seems sometimes a little difficult to account for the violent opposition engendered by Port-Royal. Richelieu imprisoned Saint-Cyran for five years, but the cause of his enmity is a little obscure. The Cardinal had tried to win Saint-Cyran as an

adherent ; he had offered him, it is said, eight bishoprics in succession. Once, when surrounded by his courtiers, Richelieu had touched Saint-Cyran on the shoulder—" Gentlemen, you see here the most learned man in Europe." No doubt he came later to regard Saint-Cyran as a dangerous rival—" more dangerous than six armies," he said. Further, Saint-Cyran was gathering about him a party of some of the most influential men in France. " A great many calamities would have been averted," Richelieu remarked, " if Luther and Calvin had been shut up as soon as they began to dogmatize." So the Cardinal shut up Saint-Cyran ; but the work of the abbot marched on. Monsieur le Maistre sought Saint-Cyran's direction before the imprisonment of the latter ; the great Arnauld, after his imprisonment. Sensational conversions these, that made a nine days' wonder in Paris.

For Le Maistre was the most brilliant advocate of his time. Born of a great race of lawyers, he bid fair to eclipse them all. He was the grandson of Monsieur Arnauld, and the son of Angélique's elder sister. Great in gifts of eloquence, great in vigour of intellect, great in charm of personality, his success at the Bar was immediate and striking. Popular preachers knew it was vain to expect a congregation on the days when Le Maistre was pleading, for all Paris flocked to the Courts. When he was only twenty-five the Chancellor made Le Maistre Councillor of State ; Richelieu spoke of him with admiration. With weighty influence thus

added to his natural genius, he might have gone any length. The zest of life was strong in him; the world's praise sang in his ears; suddenly, before he was thirty, he stopped in his headlong career of triumph, renounced the pomp and glory of this world, put himself under Saint-Cyran's direction, and shut himself in a little room to devote his life henceforth wholly to God. "For a hundred years, perhaps," he writes, with most interesting frankness, "there has not been another man placed as I was in the midst of the corruption of the Palais, in the prime of life, and possessing every advantage of connexion, and all the vanity of the orator, choosing the moment when his reputation was most firm, his wealth most assured and his hopes at their highest, to break every bond and throw off all the enchantment whereby mankind is held, making himself poor when he had hitherto laboured for riches; practising austerity and penitence where he had hitherto revelled in luxury; living in solitude where he had hitherto been courted by other men; caring only for contemplation where he had been wont to care only for work; shrouding himself in the darkness of a hidden life where he had always been in the midst of excitement and notoriety; and finally, practising continual silence when his claim for admiration rested upon speech."

We shall have to show later how the greatness of Port-Royal is linked with the greatness of the amazing family of the Arnaulds; how it drew sister after sister, brother after brother, nephews and

nieces, within its austere circle. Le Maistre was the first of the recluses, and dominated them till his death. He had no wish to become monk or priest: he desired merely to live in retirement. The nuns of Port-Royal were at that time lodged in Paris, having abandoned, in 1625, the Convent of Port-Royal des Champs, a few miles south-west of the capital. Catherine, the mother of Le Maistre, though not then professed, spent much of her time at Port-Royal, and her four sisters were nuns in the convent. She proposed to Saint-Cyran to build for her son a little lodge in the courtyard of the convent. The building was begun in 1637, and in 1638 Le Maistre took up his abode there. He was joined by his soldier brother and a few other solitaries. So, by natural process, and without fixed design, the recluses became attached to the Convent of Port-Royal. The confessor brought with him four boy pupils, and these formed the nucleus of the Port-Royal schools, afterwards so famous.

The force and tenacity of the inner religion is well shown in the fact that no outer pledges were given or required. "There is no institution for special discipline here," wrote Le Maistre, "nor even a fixed place of abode; there is no rule but that of the Gospel, no bond save that of the charity that is Catholic and universal, no aim, individual or collective, save that of reaching heaven. It is only a place of absolutely voluntary retreat, where no one comes unless he be led by the Spirit of God, and no one stays unless the Spirit of God retains him.

Those who are there live together as friends by that common liberty of choice which the king permits to all his subjects. But they are Christian friends joined together by the blood that Jesus Christ shed for all men, and which, by the Holy Spirit, has so filled their hearts that their union is closer, stronger, and purer than the deepest and firmest of earthly friendships." Matins were said in the chapel at one A.M. and finished at two; at which hour the nuns came in. Literary work occupied any leisure left over from prayer, study, meditation. The recluses were not occupied only in controversial writings; de Saci, a brother of Le Maistre, a priest, translated the Bible, which appeared in Paris in instalments from 1672 to the end of the century. A French translation of it already existed, but it had been made by Protestants, and was not therefore acceptable to Jansenist priests. Le Maistre translated "The Lives of the Saints," d'Andilly, Angélique's eldest brother, Josephus, St Augustine's "Confessions," and many other works. The untiring energy of the Port-Royal recluses is well summed up in the immortal phrase of the great Arnauld: "Rest! have we not eternity to rest in?"

The great Arnauld figures in the history of Port-Royal as largely as his nephew Le Maistre. (Arnauld, *le petit oncle*, was a few years younger than his nephew, and twenty years younger than his sister Angélique). He was a priest, and Doctor of Theology at the Sorbonne. We have already touched on his book, "De la Frequente Communion." Nothing

illustrates more clearly the unique position held by Saint-Cyran than the letter which Arnauld, himself a priest, addressed to the abbot in prison (1638) :

"My Father,—Permit me to call you by this name, since God has given me the will to be your son. For years I have been in a continual lethargy, seeing what is good, and not doing it. . . . Through my own miserable experience I have learned the truth of these words: the truth in us is darkened by the lure of trifling things. My father, for about three weeks God has been crying in my heart, and He has given me ears to hear."

Saint-Cyran replied : " You have become master of my life as soon as you have become servant of God." He bade him " distil into your heart all the knowledge you have in your head, so that it may rise again and spread when God pleases."

Arnauld devoted himself to the promulgation of Jansenist views with a zeal and a violence that brought about his downfall. Pamphlet after pamphlet issued from his teeming brain. In 1656 he was condemned by the Sorbonne—chiefly for stating that the fall of St Peter was due to a withdrawal of Grace—a view held by many of the early Fathers. Thenceforward he fought against the world—" ce petit homme noir et laid "—stubborn, indomitable, continually in hiding, fleeing from persecution, maintaining a lost cause with a persistent energy that no defeat could weaken.

He is in every way a contrast to his eldest brother d'Andilly, twenty-four years older than himself, who joined the recluses in 1644. With this handsome old man, gracious, debonair, the favourite of courts, we associate all the amenities of Port-Royal. For in 1638 the recluses and their pupils —some ten to twelve persons in all—moved from Paris to the old deserted convent of Port-Royal des Champs in the country. This had been abandoned by the nuns twelve years before, and was falling into decay and ruin; here the solitaries lived amid varying vicissitudes, first in the convent itself, then, when the nuns came back, in dwellings outside. They were dispersed no less than four times, in 1638, in 1656, in 1661, and finally in 1679. At the dispersal of 1656 there were twenty solitaries and fifteen children, among them Racine. But after the periods of persecution, the solitaries used to return; and under the direction of d'Andilly, the swamp on which the convent was situated became a fruitful garden. He caused the marsh to be drained, and conduits for the water to be made, and the land to be laid out in terraces and walks. D'Andilly grew magnificent fruit, which was sold for the benefit of the poor. So Racine writes:

> "Je viens à vous, arbres fertiles,
> Poiriers de pompe et de plaisirs; . . ."

So immoderate was the zeal of the recluses in this work, much of which they did with their own hands, that their directors had to check it under obedience.

The core of our subject is the cloister, strictly enclosed, yet radiating forth a keen and stimulating influence on its surroundings. Encircling the cloister we have a band of recluses—men of iron will, who required no monastic vows to hold them to a life of strictest discipline and abstinence. Le Maistre dominates them all; Antoine Arnauld secretly comes and goes; d'Andilly, patriarch of the community, grows his enormous pears; Pascal, the last of the saints, as he has been called, writes his immortal "Pensées" between bouts of intolerable suffering. "*La foi parfaite, c'est Dieu sensible au cœur,*" he says. And that, after all, we may take as the complete expression of Port-Royal. It was the desire for this experience that drew both nuns and recluses to Port-Royal, that enabled them to dispense not only with the luxuries and even the necessities of life, but also with the trappings and lures of religion. In profligate France in the seventeenth century a little community of men and women stripped themselves bare of all things for the love of God, and embraced a life of monotony and hardship, impossible to be rightly understood except by those who have heard the call. This is the central fact of Port-Royal and of the influence of Port-Royal; but this fact is often obscured by the great mass of controversy, of invective and intrigue, of logic and dialectic that has accumulated round the convent. We have endeavoured, tentatively at least, to penetrate this mass; and so we arrive at the Mère Angélique.

The Kernel

We have to start this chapter with a somewhat scandalous recital. The corruption of the Church at various epochs has already been alluded to in these pages; at certain periods when it became acute, great-hearted reformers appeared to restore once more the noble practice and high aim that had suffered deterioration. The greater the demoralization, the greater the need for inexorable cauterization: excessive austerities were due to natural reaction against excessive disorders. The severity of the rule and doctrine imposed by the Mère Angélique are therefore best understood by reference to the conditions prevailing in the religious houses of her time. Fitting prelude to our theme, Henry of Navarre, genial in manner, jovial in appearance, is the first figure to ride with debonair gaiety out hunting across these pages. He reins up his steed at the gates of the convent of Bertaucourt, near Amiens, and asks admission. What business has this free-thinking king, who considered Paris well worth a Mass, to do with abbess or nuns? Simply—"le Roi s'amuse": he has come to visit "la Belle Gabrielle"; and the sister of "la Belle Gabrielle," Madame d'Estrées, is the complaisant Abbess of Bertaucourt. "La Belle Gabrielle," however, finds Bertaucourt somewhat distant from Paris and inconvenient for the visits of her volatile king. She takes this opportunity of urging Henry to move Madame d'Estrées as abbess to the more important convent of Maubuisson. Henry at first

THE MÈRE ANGÉLIQUE

From Van Schuppen's engraving of the portrait by Philippe de Champagne

demurs — perhaps he does not want "la Belle Gabrielle" too near the capital. Finally, however, he gives his promise, and the manner in which he sets about the affair is particularly instructive.

The convent of Maubuisson possessed the somewhat rare right of electing its own abbesses—a right, however, that had never been confirmed. A new abbess had recently been elected. One day she was told that the King had stopped at the door. Great was the joy of the nuns at this signal honour, and Henry was received with all reverence and respect. In casual conversation with the simple abbess he touched on this question of election, and asked her by what right she held her title. She, thinking to obtain from him the much-desired confirmation of the privilege by royal patent, fell incontinent into the trap. "It is yours, Sire, to confer this right," she said. Following this declaration, she heard that Henry had procured bulls from Rome to dispossess her. The King himself brought Madame d'Estrées to Maubuisson, held a chapter, and made the nuns promise obedience. He had thus two convenient convents at which he could visit "la Belle Gabrielle."

It is in truth an ugly story. Madame d'Estrées was no fit person to be put in charge of any abbey. For, abbess as she was, she had had twelve daughters; these were educated in her convent in accordance with the rank of their respective fathers. After this we are not surprised to learn that the convent was anything but wisely governed. The nuns acted comedies before a select circle of guests and adapted

their religious garb to meet the fashion. On summer days they used to join the monks of St Martin de Pontoise, and dance with them beyond the convent walls. Grave moral irregularities ensued; yet Antoine Arnauld, the Advocate-General to Henry IV., did not hesitate to place in Madame d'Estrées' charge his little girl aged nine years old, the subject of this sketch. She remained at Maubuisson for two impressionable years and took the veil there.

Antoine Arnauld was a far-seeing father; he wished to make due provision for all his children. Not all his daughters could aspire to marriage; the Religious life offered a career both praiseworthy and dignified. But Monsieur Arnauld had no desire to see his girls simple nuns; they must have a position worthy their parentage; they must be abbesses. His second and third daughters, Jacqueline and Jeanne, were at this time seven and five years old. Monsieur Arnauld had no scruple as to vocation; it never occurred to him to question the future fitness of his daughters for the work. The influence of Henry IV. was obtained; abbots were made complaisant by a royal word. Jacqueline (known as the Mère Angélique) became co-adjutrix to the aged abbess of Port-Royal; Jeanne (known as the Mère Agnès) at once assumed the position of abbess of St Cyr. The Holy See, however, was not quite so easily won over; and Arnauld, though he was a devout son of the Church, did not hesitate to misrepresent the ages of his daughters to gain his end. So, with a little manipulation, all was

accomplished, and the girls given a position befitting their station.

The appointment of these children to somewhat obscure convents was to have far-reaching results. Monsieur Arnauld never dreamed that in thus settling his daughters he was settling the destiny practically of his whole family. His own wife was to take the veil at Port-Royal after his death, six of his daughters were to be nuns there, and five of his granddaughters (the children of d'Andilly). Two of his sons, d'Andilly and the great Arnauld, three of his grandsons, sons of Madame le Maistre, became Port-Royal recluses. And, with a few exceptions, all these children and grandchildren were gifted with an unusual force of intellect and strength of character. Monsieur Arnauld belonged to the "noblesse de la robe": his most famous oration was his philippic against the Jesuits (1594). This has wittily been called "the Original Sin" of the Arnaulds. His children inherited the acuteness of mind, the critical faculty, the sharp penetration, the independence of judgment that we associate with the great exponents of the law; but with this was combined religious conviction so overwhelming that all human obstacles gave way before it. To many of them, religion was logic, and therefore, all the more irresistibly, life.

The convent of Port-Royal had been founded in the thirteenth century. It was built in a deep hollow between shaggy woods in the valley of the Yvette, a few miles south-west of Paris. Marshes and stagnant water surrounded the building, which was over-

shadowed by a thick luxuriance of vegetation. When St Bernard of Clairvaux fixed the details of the Benedictine Rule, the nuns of Port-Royal adopted his reform. The situation of their abbey made this peculiarly appropriate, for St Bernard always established his monasteries in deep valleys where the horizon was shut out and the sky alone visible.

> " Bernardus valles, colles Benedictus amabat,
> Oppida Franciscus, magnas Ignatius urbes."[1]

The exhalation of poisonous mists, the damp church and damp cells, the superabundance of rotting vegetation, made the convent anything but healthy, and this was one reason for the removal of the nuns to Paris in 1625. Saint-Cyran, however, considered such questions as health entirely beneath notice. " It is quite as good a thing to praise God in an infirmary, if that is His will, as in a church. There are no better prayers than those we offer from a bed of suffering."

In 1602 the abbess of Port-Royal died, and Angélique was sent for from Maubuisson to assume the position. The little girl was now eleven, and had already taken the veil. After a pretended election by the thirteen nuns of the convent, Angélique was installed abbess.

Beyond frivolity and ignorance, no serious faults attached to the abbey. The confessor was a Bernardine monk who cared only for hunting, and did not know a word of the catechism. The nuns followed the fashion, wore gloves, and masks for their com-

plexions, read romances, and visited their friends beyond the walls. Visitors, including men, were admitted within the precincts—Monsieur Arnauld came often to supervise the convent's affairs. It was an easy-going, aimless life that the sisters led, without definite harm or definite good, and Angélique, as she emerged into girlhood, began to feel a fierce resentment against the meaningless and monotonous existence into which she had been forced. She had an active, energetic, passionate disposition ; the world called her with its colour, its movement, its strife. When she lay ill at her father's house in Paris, the rustling satins and silks worn by her uncles and aunts were a poignant distress to her ; and secretly she had a pair of whalebone corsets made to improve her figure.

Her conversion was due to one of those apparent accidents of which life is full. A passing friar asked to be allowed to preach a sermon at Port-Royal, and as he preached, the light came to her. In a flash the girl of sixteen *saw*. She saw a sight calculated to terrify and appal the strongest soul. She saw the overwhelming Greatness of God, which often we are unable to express except in terms of our own littleness. She saw, beside this dazzling Purity, the world in hideous colours of sin ; she saw beside this stupendous Majesty and Power, man, weak, helpless, diseased. Extreme self-abasement is the only way in which some can measure the towering awfulness of Godhead: this was the chosen way of the nuns and recluses of Port-Royal. St François de Sales wrote to Angélique

of God guiding the stumbling steps of the soul as a father his child, to whom he whispers, "Gently, my child, go gently." But not so did Angélique vision Him. There are some natures to whom softness seems a sign of weakness; to whom Omnipotence must appear inexorable. Angélique's character was of stern fibre, and required, perhaps, the vibration of a severe faith. But from the very first her path was a path of suffering.

For, with the realization of God came a realization of her tremendous responsibility, of her utter insufficiency. She was Abbess of a convent of the Benedictine Rule, a convent living in sin, false to its vows of poverty and enclosure. Often, in abject humility, she desired to throw off a weight too heavy for her young shoulders, and turn simple nun. Her confessors, to whom she confided her anguish of difficulty, only bewildered her with contradictory advice. Some bid her carry her reform by assault, some counselled inactivity, a hopeful patience. She sought to purify her judgment, to obtain divine leading, by mortifications, the excesses of which she afterwards acknowledged to be the excesses of youth, and she fell a prey to physical depression and religious melancholy. Yet out of this difficult experience, out of every extreme and every moment of despair, she was to gain that knowledge which was to make her so powerful a director of souls—she was to win the understanding of spiritual states, the power to inspire and to heal.

"The road that leads to life is very narrow," she

wrote later on, " the cross that our Lord Jesus Christ commands us to bear after Him is very painful to the flesh. It is therefore folly to imagine that we can proceed along the narrow path to heaven, thus loaded, without suffering, Nevertheless, we are so unreasonable that we desire to go without difficulty. It is an absurdity. God will not change His laws for us. We must make up our minds to choose the pain and bitterness of our Lord's cross in this world, or damnation in the next. The hardness of our hearts requires us to think of this frequently, that fear at least may stimulate us."

This is Angélique's creed; and it is a terrible creed. In no other creed is so awful a stress put upon the reality of God's power, the dependence of man upon God. Small wonder that the girl's health suffered, and that her nuns saw her pining away before their very eyes. It was love for her that brought about the first reform. The sisters came to her begging to know the cause of her grief, promising to perform whatever she might desire. The young Abbess assembled the nuns in chapter and suggested that they should fulfil their first vow, the vow of poverty, by sharing their goods in common. Without hesitation the nuns went to their private treasure-chests and heaped their little possessions in a pile before Angélique. So, by the voluntary submission of the sisters, Angélique accomplished her first reform.

The rule of cloistration was more difficult to enforce. By the Benedictine Rule the nuns were forbidden to admit a layman beyond the convent

parlour, or speak with him except from behind the convent grille. For centuries, however, this had been a dead letter. Monsieur Arnauld, as we have said, entered the convent when he pleased, dined in the refectory, went freely about the buildings. It was no stranger who was forcing her nuns to be unfaithful to their vows, but the father whom Angélique loved and feared, the benefactor of her abbey. In those days the father was considered by right the autocrat of the family; Monsieur Arnauld was in addition a man of powerful personality. Only a heroic courage could have inspired this girl of eighteen to defy him. But the claims of her faith were urgent, and admitted of no trifling. Monsieur Arnauld wrote to announce a visit on the 25th of September 1609, the day afterwards famous in the annals of Port-Royal as the *Journée du Guichet.*

On the previous night Angélique fasted and prayed. About eleven o'clock in the morning she heard the carriage wheels drive up outside the convent gates. Monsieur Arnauld got out with his wife, his eldest daughter, Catherine le Maistre, his son-d'Andilly, and another daughter. He found the gates closed against him and began knocking violently. Angélique opened a little wicket, the *guichet*, and begged her father to come into the parlour and speak to her through the grille. But Arnauld would not listen to reason. The two could not see each other, and Angélique stood trembling but firm under the storm of sound that assailed her, the knocking at the gates, the commands of her father, the shrill expostu-

lations of her mother, the abuse of d'Andilly. Her nuns gathered about her, many of them indignant at her action. "It is a shame not to open to Monsieur Arnauld," they said. At last Arnauld, weary of the conflict and humiliation, and seeing that remonstrance was vain, told his groom to harness the horses. Had he driven away in bitterness, Angélique's victory would have cost her dear. But at the last he had a moment of relenting. He consented to see her at the grille : father and daughter stood face to face. His anger died down ; he was pale with grief and emotion ; he addressed her with gentle words of affection. She had been able to withstand the tempest of reproach, but his tenderness was more than she could bear. She fell in a dead faint on the floor.

Monsieur Arnauld's resentment was now turned to anxiety. He shouted for the nuns, and when Angélique had recovered from her faint, and he saw how weak and worn she was, he offered no further resistance. The nuns wheeled her on a couch close to the grille, and she and her father talked quietly together and came to an agreement. So Angélique emerged from this day of battle, not only victorious, but almost unhurt.

Thus this girl of eighteen succeeded in restoring to her convent the Primitive Rule concerning poverty and enclosure. It needed a strong intellect to grasp these fundamental principles of the Rule ; a strong faith, a high courage, to fight single-handed against custom, against the indifference and love of ease of her nuns, against her own natural affections. "Truly

it is a droll affair," she said to d'Andilly, when he remonstrated with her. "They made me a nun at nine years old, when I did not wish to be one, and when my age made it almost impossible that I should so wish. And now that the wish is come, they would force me to damn myself by neglecting my Rule. I am not responsible. They did not ask my leave in making a nun of me, and I shall not ask theirs to live as a nun and seek salvation."

The chief intention of these outer reforms was to make more real the inner spiritual life of every nun. The existence led within this little ill-constructed convent was of the strictest. Matins were said at two A.M., winter and summer, and the nuns did not go to bed again. Much of the day was spent in chapel; a little manual labour was ordained; the hour for recreation was short, and speech was discouraged. The nuns wore coarse serge, and slept in coarse serge sheets. Instrumental music, ornament, all that makes appeal to the emotions, was strenuously banished. Yet, in the course of a few years, the number of the nuns increased from thirteen to eighty. The fame of the convent was noised abroad; missionary nuns went from Port-Royal even on distant expeditions to other convents to spread the reform. Sainte-Beuve calls the nuns "de grande practiciennes des âmes, des ouvrières apostoliques consommées."

It is sometimes difficult for the layman to understand the enthusiasm for a life so hard, so monotonous, so austere. A. K. H., in an admirable book on

Angélique of Port-Royal, has approached this question with much sympathy. He quotes from Père Chocarne Dominicaine : "The Religious is one who professes, if not to attain, at least to attempt continually to reach the highest point, the love of God in denial of self. All religious discipline rests on the great idea of renewing the unity betwixt God and man by sacrifice. But the world, which sees the sacrifice and not its reward, which sees the scar and not the hand that gave the wound, the world is astonished and repelled." A. K. H. adds : "Monasticism can offer nothing but wearisome monotony and useless self-denial, if it could reasonably be viewed at all apart from the thought of Christ. There, and there only, is its explanation, and the first step towards even superficial understanding of it is the realization that for the true Religious there can be no half-measures. . . . Those who have been permitted to aspire to a sense of the companionship of Christ, must lose even a thought of sacrifice. No gift can seem costly to the giver if in the depths of his soul he is certain of so great a recompense. Once admit the fact of this certainty, and the true theory of monasticism ceases to be a mystery, the most austere of Trappists excites no wonder, and those only demand commiseration who pause to weigh the worth of what they give, and by reserving a fraction of the whole, forfeit the glorious knowledge of its acceptance."

And now our story brings us again to the abbey of Maubuisson and to Madame d'Estrées. After the death of Henry IV. the convent lost his powerful

protection, and its scandals were too notorious to be overlooked. The Abbess refused either to leave the convent, or to meet the high dignitaries who came to parley with her. A warrant had to be obtained for her arrest. The provost arrived, provided with scaling ladders, and with some difficulty managed to seize her, and carried her away.

The convent of Maubuisson was of the Benedictine Order, and was, like Port-Royal, under the jurisdiction of the monks of Citeaux. The Father-General, therefore, approached Angélique, begging her to assume the position of Abbess, in order to bring about a reform. Angélique had spent two years of her childhood at Maubuisson ; the stupendous nature of the task demanded of her appealed to her ardent tempera ment. She thirsted for opportunities of labour, of endurance, of sacrifice, and in 1618 she went to Maubuisson. The work before her was of a nature to affright the most courageous.

We have tried to give some idea of the moral disorder that reigned in the convent ; the ignorance was equally appalling : the nuns all confessed themselves in the same words, and for greater convenience they had written out this confession in a book which they used to lend to each other. Angélique set herself with heroic determination to cope with these innumerable evils. She spared neither herself nor anyone else. To her young sister, Marie-Claire, who accompanied her, she said : " It will require us to put away all thought of our own health or our own interests that we may save the souls of others. I know your

bodily weakness, and have therefore already made your life an offering to God, having small doubt that you will forfeit your health." By her own practice, by ceaseless vigilance, by her power to sustain and inspire, by passionate prayer, she sought to help and raise those who had fallen away so far ; but the task was one almost beyond human strength. She then conceived the expedient of leavening this mass of indifference and rebellion by introducing a large number of novices whom she might train night and day—girls of high aspiration and, by preference, of little wealth, whose example must influence the community. Within a year thirty new recruits were under her care. It was at this time that she made the acquaintance of St François de Sales—" God was truly and visibly in this holy bishop," she wrote. But in spite of the confidence and admiration he inspired in her, François de Sales exercised little influence on her story or on the story of Port-Royal. His was a creed of abounding love, welling up continuously like a fountain, bubbling over and over in rainbow-coloured images, flashing, innumerous. " Tout par amour, rien par force "—those were the words continually on his lips. He brought Angélique a measure of peace, but her soul perhaps required the tonic of a harsher creed. Not till she met Saint-Cyran did she find the director after her own heart.

Meanwhile Madame d'Estrées was not idle. She escaped from the retreat in which she had been placed, and gathered about her a band of her old lovers and

admirers. These noblemen she left outside the convent walls, and herself obtained secret admission into the convent. As Angélique was going to choir, she met Madame d'Estrées face to face. We will give Angélique's own account of this dramatic episode, as she related it, many years later, to her nephew, le Maistre.

"About the hour of Tierce the abbess appeared among us, having left Monsieur de Sangé and his companions outside. As we went into choir she approached me and said: 'Madame, I have come here to thank you for the care you have taken of my abbey during my absence, and to advise you to return now to your own, leaving me in charge of mine.' I answered: 'Madame, I should be most willing to do so if I might, but you know that it is our Superior, M. l'Abbé de Citeaux, who bade me come to take direction here, and having come under obedience; it is only under obedience that I can leave. . . . Therefore forgive me if I take the Abbess's place.' And therewith I took my place, having the support of the nuns whom I had admitted within the year." The confessor came to her after dinner and advised her to withdraw. "I told him that I would not do so and that my conscience would not permit it. But I was yet more astonished to see him come into the church with M. de Sangé's four gentlemen, and come forward as their leader to exhort me once more to yield to force and depart, to prevent the evil that might come if I forced them to take violent measures. (One even fired a pistol, imagining he would

frighten me by so doing.) But I was not agitated, and I answered again that I would not retire except under compulsion, as it was only under these circumstances that I should feel myself absolved by God. At this point my nuns surrounded me, and each one placed her hand within my girdle, thereby so tightening it that I could hardly breathe. Madame d'Estrées grew heated in abuse of me, and—she having touched my veil and given it a little pull as if she desired to drag it from my head—my sisters, who were lambs, became as lions, and one, who was big and strong (her name was Anne de Ste Thède, the daughter of a gentleman) went close to her and said: 'Are you so insolent as to wish to take the veil from Mme de Port-Royal? You miscreant! I know you, I know what you are!' And therewith in full face of these men with their drawn swords, she snatched Mme d'Estrées' veil from her head and hurled it six paces away. Mme d'Estrées, seeing I was resolved not to withdraw, bade these gentlemen expel me by force, and this they did, laying hold of my arms. I made no resistance, being well pleased to depart and take my nuns away from a place where there were such men as these, from whom I had everything to fear, both on their behalf and on my own. It was not, however, Mme d'Estrées' wish that they should go with me, for she feared the publicity of that. For this reason she had me placed in a carriage. But no sooner had I taken my place than nine or ten of my nuns followed me—three climbed on the coachman's box, three got up at the back like footmen, and

the rest clung to the wheels. Madame d'Estrées bade the coachman whip up his horses, but he answered that he dared not, for he should kill many of the nuns. Thereupon I sprang out of the carriage with my sisters. I made them take strong waters because the Plague was at Pontoise, whither I went with thirty of them, marching two and two as in a procession. . . . When we entered Pontoise the people poured blessings upon us, exclaiming, 'Here come the nuns of our good Mme de Port-Royal. They have left the devil in their convent!'" A convenient house was offered the nuns for lodging, and an express was despatched to Paris. On the afternoon of the next day two hundred and fifty archers arrived to reinstate Angélique. Madame d'Estrées fled; the archers proceeded to Pontoise, and conducted Angélique and her nuns back to the abbey. It was ten at night when the little procession started. They returned as they had come, on foot; each of the archers had a torch in his hand and his musket over his shoulder.

These thirty nuns, loyal and devoted, were to be made a reproach to Angélique. Though Maubuisson was a rich convent, Angélique was accused of having impoverished the house by "filling it with beggars"—for the novices had been received without dowries. Angélique was stung to the quick; she offered to transfer all these sisters to Port-Royal, which had only one-fifth the income of the larger convent. The authorities consented; the nuns of Port-Royal consented; Madame Arnauld sent carriages to convey

the sisters to their new home. The nuns of Port-Royal received with delight this present that God had made them " to enrich their house more and more," as Angélique said, "with the inexhaustible treasure of poverty." Saint-Cyran, when he heard of this action of Angélique's, called it one of " sainte hardiesse."

In 1625 the Mère Angélique moved her community from Port-Royal des Champs to Paris. Through the generosity of Madame Arnauld, a large house had been acquired for the convent in the Faubourg St Jacques. The cause of this removal was twofold. The nuns were suffering in health from the terribly overcrowded condition of the house and its unwholesome surroundings. Fever was continual ; fifteen of the nuns died in two years. But considerations of physical health weighed only lightly with the Mère Angélique. Her concern was almost wholly for the spiritual health of the sisterhood ; and she believed that by transferring the control of the house from the hands of the monks to the hands of the episcopacy she would free it from dangerous influence and interference.

St Benedict, as interpreted by St Bernard of Clairvaux, had ordained that the nuns should be under the monks of the same community. One of the most difficult problems that the Mère Angélique had to meet, was how to reconcile her obedience to her Superiors with her obedience to her conscience. For the monks placed all the opposition they could in the way of her reform. If convents were lax and disordered, monasteries were certainly not less so—and Angélique's restoration of the Primitive Rule con-

veyed a covert reproach to all—nuns and monks—who ignored it. "That I may show what direction a nun may look for from a monk," she says, "I only desire to set out what they lack in helping us in the right way, concealing the miserable devices which they make evil use of. When an abbess is haughty, the confessor is her henchman. This is so absolutely true that I have seen one occupied in planting the abbess's flower-beds, where he placed her arms and her cipher. Another I have seen carrying the train of an abbess, as lackeys do to court ladies. If an abbess is humble and holds the priesthood in reverence, as is her duty, they become masters and tyrants, so that no one may dare to act without their order—which often means disorder." The first direction that Père Archange de Pembroke gave to the young Angélique, "and one which has been of great service to me," she writes, "was not ever to permit our sisters to hold converse with a monk, not even with a Capuchin, though he might preach like an angel." The Bernardine directors at Maubuisson were almost as great a trial to her as the degenerate nuns. "The inconsequence and lack of spirituality in these monks almost drove me to distraction," she writes, "and if God had not held me up, I should have utterly fallen away from grace." It was one thing for women to obey the inspired Founders of orders, another for them to be under the dominion of their unworthy successors. Teresa herself, as we have shown, was met by this difficulty, and unwise interference from friars did much to undermine her

Reform. Angélique hoped to solve her problem by transferring allegiance from the monks of Citeaux to the Archbishop of Paris. And yet—strange irony—immediately after she had taken this decisive step and won her freedom from a dangerous domination; she gave herself into the direction of a man wholly unable to guide her aright, who led her into quagmires of bitterness and remorse.

She met Sebastien Zamet, Bishop of Langres, soon after he had experienced conversion. His personality was attractive; his enthusiasm inspiring. He overflowed with admiration for Angélique's Reform, and had himself been the means of reforming the important convent of Tard. Moreover, he cherished a project of founding an order for the perpetual adoration of the Sacrament. Already at Port-Royal Angélique had established this practice, and the similarity of aspiration created another bond of sympathy. Her penetrating insight into character was for once at fault. She did not realize that this man's eager piety—real as it may have been at the moment—was no more than a passing phase. She did not discern the passionate ambition, the love of pomp and outward trappings, that lay hidden at the roots of his nature. Deliberate herself, by his impulsiveness she was carried off her feet; and she placed her convent of Port-Royal de Paris under his direction.

Her desire to resign the burden of office was no girlish whim. It had persisted through all these years of work and responsibility, and a visit of Marie

de Medicis to the convent gave her the opening she sought. She petitioned the Queen-mother to beg the King to grant the abbey the privilege of electing its abbess triennially. The boon was granted. Angélique sent in her resignation. In 1630 the Mère Geneviève, who had been one of her novices at Maubuisson, was elected in her stead.

And now Angélique was called upon to face a trial more bitter than any she had experienced at Maubuisson. Geneviève was wholly under the influence of Zamet; Angélique as simple nun had the intolerable pain of watching her labour of long years ruthlessly torn down by the Abbess and Bishop. The Mère Geneviève held that "the effect of their poverty, their simplicity, their docility had been to make the nuns imbecile," and she did all in her power to reverse the usage of her predecessor. She had writing materials put in all the cells, "and the church," wrote Angélique, "was full of scents and drapery and flowers, and every day new acquaintances were made. Therewith the most abnormal austerity. Fasts on bread and water, the fiercest discipline, the most humiliating penances conceivable." Angélique abhorred sensationalism in any form. "There is danger lest voluntary penance means self-adornment rather than self-surrender," she said. All that she had striven against, hysteria, emotionalism, appeals to the senses, were crowding back upon her purified convent. And she had to look on, bound by silence and obedience. "You are condemning us," Zamet said to her one day. "I say nothing," was Angélique's reply.

" Your shadow condemns us then," was the Bishop's retort. She answered : " Send me away wherever you will, I will go."

Zamet had discovered by now that Angélique was no tool for his purpose, and when in 1633 the Order of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was established, he sought to prevent her from obtaining the position of Mother Superior. The Archbishop of Paris, however, insisted on her appointment.

Zamet had drawn up the constitution of the Order of Adoration, and ordained many rules that were just and good, says Angélique, "but some were not either." Indeed, no more striking contrast could be found than the ideals held by Angélique and those aimed at by the Founder of the Order. Angélique sought nuns whose true vocation was the religious life ; again and again she had accepted novices without dowry, without social position. The Bishop would not receive into his Order any sister unless she brought with her ten thousand francs ; and he wished above all to attract ladies of rank and title. The convent was for this reason situated in a fashionable quarter near the Court, and this outweighed in his opinion the fact that the neighbourhood was noisy, inconvenient and crowded. Angélique had a passion for poverty, for simplicity : " Poverty consists in a disposition of the heart to suffer the want of necessary things," she says, " even to dying naked like Jesus Christ. . . . To die of poverty is to die with Christ and in Christ. We should render thanks to God if we were reduced to having nothing but bread and

water." The Bishop, however, desired the Church of the Adoration to be the most beautiful and the most ornate in Paris, and his nuns the most effective in attire. They were to wear clothes made of the choicest material, the habit was to be of white serge with graceful folds and hanging sleeves; a scarlet cross was to be worked upon the scapulary. Angélique believed that the way to God was the way of self-denial; but the Bishop desired to make everything easy, so that the world of fashion might be drawn to the convent. For instance, instead of chanting matins at two in the morning, they were to be said overnight at eight o'clock.

It is a little difficult to imagine this stern woman in her striking robes amid these surroundings so antagonistic to her nature. We do not know what inward rebellion she suffered, but gradually her dominating personality began to impress itself upon the community. New difficulties, however, lay ahead.

We have now come to a turning-point in the story of the Mère Angélique. The first suspicion of heresy is breathed against the nuns of Port-Royal—breathed, indeed, in a fit of pique, the result of petty intrigues.

The Archbishop of Sens was associated with the management of the Order of Adoration; he had continual differences with his colleagues, and particularly disliked Zamet; he was further incited by the Carmelite community, who were jealous of the new Order, to endeavour to secure its suppression. Now Angélique's sister, the Mère

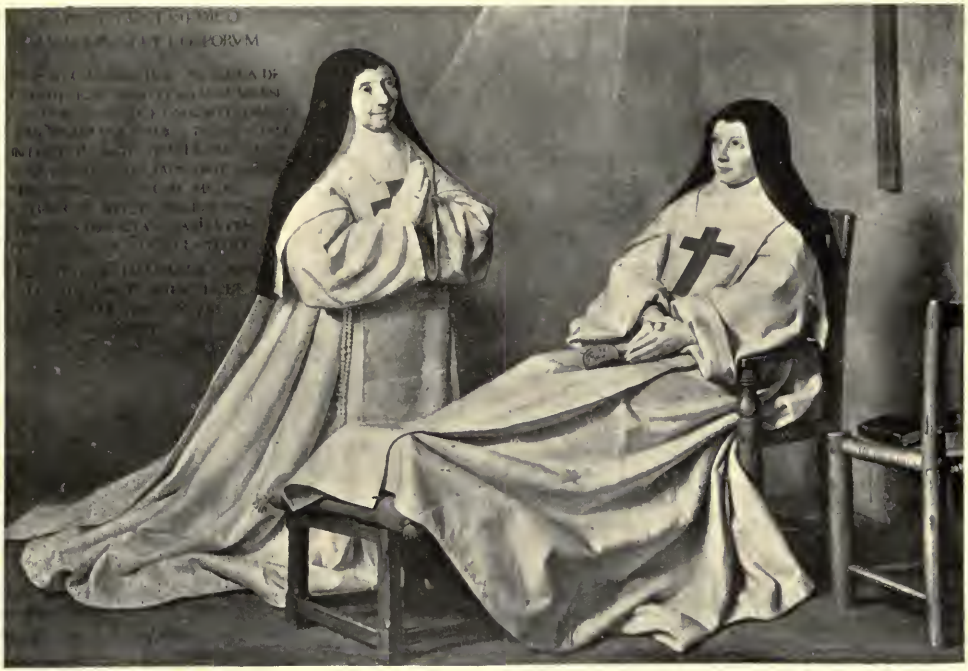
Agnès, had written many years before a little mystical treatise of devotion which she called "The Secret Chaplet." She had shown it to the Bishop of Langres, who had approved it, but it was only intended for her own private meditation. The Archbishop of Sens procured a copy and laid it before the Sorbonne. It was censured as being full of extravagance, impertinence, error, blasphemy, and impiety, tending to destroy the method of prayer instituted by Jesus Christ. The Bishop of Langres was accused of being the author of the treatise; he found himself suddenly regarded with disfavour, suspicion. Further, the orthodoxy of the Port-Royal nuns was called into question; it was assumed that they were impregnated with the doctrines of "The Chaplet." It mattered nothing that they had never seen a copy of the book—that when the storm came Angélique herself was unable to procure one. Loyal daughter of the Church, she knew not how to defend herself or her community. The pamphlet had been sent to Rome, and the possibility of papal condemnation hung over her. Zamet, dazed by this untoward turn of events, disappointed, helpless, was no more than a broken reed to lean upon.

Angélique stood alone amid the consciousness of ruin. She felt that the new Order was doomed. Characteristically, she attributed this failure to her own sinfulness. She had been weak where she should have stood firm; she had accepted conditions unworthy of her ideals; she had ignored her experience and misused her opportunities. She

was burdened, too, with sordid financial responsibilities, incurred by the Bishop. It was one of the bitterest moments of her life. Later, she became accustomed to the stigma of heresy, but the first shock of such an accusation must have been overwhelming. "So far did the persecution spread," wrote Angélique, "that even the Court took part, and we were proclaimed as heretics, as visionaries; some went so far as to say we practised sorcery."

In this crisis Saint-Cyran comes upon the scene. Defender of Port-Royal against the first charge of heresy, the very doctrines he imposed upon the community were to compass its downfall. Saint-Cyran constituted himself the champion of "The Secret Chaplet," and Zamet, only too eager to shift a burden he was too weak to bear upon stronger shoulders, placed the new Order under his direction. So, for good or ill, the Order of the Adoration, Angélique and Port-Royal, passed into the control of the Abbot of Saint-Cyran.

Many names of men and women have been linked together in these pages: Héloïse and Abelard; Clare and Francis; Teresa and John of the Cross. Strong divergencies in temperament have drawn together some of these couples; in others, an illuminating sympathy, an intuitive penetration have made them one in spirit and in aim. But we venture to think that few men and women have been so identical in character and in ideal as Saint-Cyran and the Mère Angélique. Yet they were practically unacquainted with each other till middle



THE MÈRE AGNÈS AND SŒUR CATHERINE DE SAINTE-SUZANNE

From the ex-voto of Philippe de Champagne. (**Louvre**)

life. He was fifty-three and she forty-three when they came into close intercourse. Different as they were in experience, in training and in sex, the faith they held was the same in scope. They looked out upon life from the same viewpoint, and were agreed, not only upon ultimate questions, but upon points of detail. "It should be realized," said the Mère Angélique, "that he used no force to produce a sense of penitence, nor did he insist on great mortification or austerity. But by the grace of God he was given the power of bringing home to the hearts of men the love and reverence they owed to God so strongly that a great sorrow for having offended Him sprang up, and therewith so great a desire to be reconciled that they straightway desired to do more than he required. His ardent care for souls involved no pressure on them, but rather inspired hope and consolation in the thought that God had wished to heal them by sending them so good a physician, for he dealt with them in uprightness and charity and by no methods that were either severe or over-scrupulous." This is Saint-Cyran seen at his best, through the eyes of one who understood him. Angélique might almost have applied to Saint-Cyran the judgment of character pronounced upon herself by her sister-in-law, Madame d'Andilly: "La Mère Angélique ressemble aux bons anges qui effrayent d'abord et qui consolent après."

Both Angélique and Saint-Cyran were stern and inflexible; both had a rare power of inspiring

devotion. Saint-Cyran's method of direction may be studied in many documents and has been alluded to in the foregoing chapter. Angélique instinctively applied the same method in her reforms. There was something virile in her nature that approximated her to him ; but at times there welled up in her a great tenderness, such as the abbot, with all his charity, never manifested. Surely a measure of peace must have come to her after the storm when she placed herself under the guidance, "strong, holy, inspired," she writes, "of this servant of God."

The Convent of the Adoration soon ceased to exist, and the nuns belonging to it were transferred to Port-Royal. Angélique herself returned to her own house in 1636. In 1647 the Pope granted a bull, sanctioning her nuns to practise the perpetual adoration of the Sacrament.

Lasting as was Saint-Cyran's influence, his actual connexion with Port-Royal was brief. In 1638 he was imprisoned, and not released till 1643, after Richelieu's death. Agnès was the first in the convent to hear the good news of his freedom. It was the hour of silence, and she snatched off her girdle to indicate that the bonds of the prisoner were broken. But a few months later, death more effectually broke his bonds. It was during the latter years of Saint-Cyran's life that the recluses began to gather about Port-Royal.

From 1642 to 1654 Angélique was abbess, being elected four times in succession. These twelve years were years of comparative quiet. In 1648

Angélique returned to Port-Royal des Champs with some of her nuns, leaving others in the Paris house, and her letters of this year furnish a most vivid picture, not only of the condition of France during the Fronde, but of her own abounding practical charity.

Twenty-two years had elapsed since the Mère Angélique had removed the nuns from Port-Royal des Champs. For ten years, during the intervals of quiet, the recluses had laboured to make the spot beautiful and fruitful. We can imagine the joy of d'Andilly in conducting his sister over the garden, and all the memories awakened in Angélique's mind by the home of her childhood, the scene of her conversion and her Reform. The Port-Royal nuns had adopted in 1647 the habit of the nuns of the Adoration, the white scapulary with the scarlet cross on the breast. What far travels this must have symbolized to Angélique from the simple black habit of the Bernardines! Yet a great measure of happiness awaited her return. She arrived with nine nuns about two in the afternoon. Her welcome was overwhelming. Bells clashed; all the peasants of the district crowded to meet her in the courtyard of the convent, remembering how good she had been to them in the past. The women threw themselves at her feet and clasped her in their arms. At the church door was another group: the recluses assembled to welcome her, and before them a priest, holding a cross. After her long travail of spirit and all the unrest of a city atmosphere, and the canker

of sordid cares and remorse, the peace of Port-Royal des Champs lay upon her like a blessing. "This holy place moves me more than all others," she wrote. "God seems here in a special way." The nuns felt the stir of a fresh spiritual enthusiasm; the influence radiated beyond the closed doors, and the recluses increased in fervour. Le Maistre writes of the nuns of Port-Royal as "our Ladies, our Mistresses and our Queens."

Here we have a significant indication of the high spiritual devotion felt by the solitaries for these consecrated women, and we are able to realize a little how the lives of the nuns and hermits, divided though they were, reacted one upon the other. But such glimpses are rare, for the cloister seals many secrets; and but for the Fronde, which dragged the Mère Angélique's charity into the light of day, we should never have known how untiring she could be in effort, how generous in spending, with what "marvellous joy" she could face difficulty and danger.

This cruel war, so irresponsibly entered upon, had brought bitter suffering upon the people. Angélique opened wide her convent doors; abbesses and ladies came for shelter; she had not room to receive the peasants as well, but she took charge of all their chattels and provisions, even their daily bread. All was done with organization and order; the goods were carefully ticketed and packed where they could be easily found. When every available corner of space was filled, she piled them into the church—

the aisles first, and then the nave. "Our church was so full of wheat, oats, peas, beans, pots, kettles, and all kinds of rags, that we had to walk over them to get into the choir, and, when we reached it, the floor was covered with books piled up belonging to our hermits. . . . We had horses in the room beneath us, and horses opposite us in the chapter-house, while in a cellar there were forty cows, belonging to us and some of the poor peasants. All the courts were full of fowls, turkeys, ducks and geese." No wonder the convent reminded her of a Noah's Ark! "The farm buildings," she goes on, "were full of the halt and maimed and wounded, and the outer courts were full of cattle. In fact, if it had not been for the great cold, we must have had the Plague; still the cold itself added to our discomfort, for our fuel failed, and we dared not send to the woods to fetch more."

Food of course reached an exorbitant price: the wretched peasants were dying of hunger and cold. Angélique had good soup made for them in huge cauldrons in the convent kitchen; she also distributed large stores of apples and pears and beetroot that had been grown under d'Andilly's direction. The recluses took their share in the practical work. They strengthened the defences of the convent; they formed an escort to guard the provisions which from time to time Angélique managed to send to the Paris house which was in danger of starvation. "Our good hermits," wrote Angélique, "girded on their swords again for our defence, and they also

threw up such strong barricades, that it would have been difficult to take us by assault."

This picture of Angélique in her Noah's Ark of a convent dwells long in the memory, illustrating as it does her strong common-sense, her power of organization, her resourcefulness, her capability, and her large humanity. If in her later years she became more vehement, so that even le Maistre rather feared her, there was yet a deep tenderness in her nature that welled up on occasion. For instance, Jacqueline Pascal, the sister of Blaise Pascal, had joined the convent as a novice; but her brother and her relatives refused to give her her share in her rightful inheritance. She was very unhappy. She tells us how the Mère Angélique sent for her after Mass and kept her an hour, "my head on her breast, embracing me with the tenderness of a true mother, and doing everything in her power to soothe my sorrow."

The courage with which the Mère Angélique met the cruelties of war was equalled by the courage with which she encountered the cruelties of persecution. Never was a persecution more unjust. The nuns were not able to read the heavy Latin book of Jansen's that was the subject of the whole contention; they were in no wise concerned with the Five Propositions. They counted themselves true daughters of the Church, vowed to a special devotion to the Sacrament, and they had derived from Saint-Cyran a firm belief in the efficacy of the priesthood. In 1653 they had even signed the first formulary

condemning the Five Propositions, salving their consciences, however, with the mental reservation that the Propositions were not in the "Augustinus." In view of future events it is pathetic to read what the Mère Agnès wrote with regard to this formulary: "We condemn what it condemns without knowing what it is; for it is enough to know that it is given by the Pope, and because we are daughters of the Church, we are bound to revere any decree of the Holy See." And yet the persecution was not stayed. "They talk of nothing less than burning or throwing us into the river," wrote Angélique to the Queen of Poland, "throughout Paris they have scattered leaflets with an exhortation to praise God on account of the ruin of the Jansenists, which, as your Majesty knows, is the unjust name they have given to us who have no desire to be aught but Christians and Catholics. . . ." Yet persecution showed the fibre of heroism in these nuns; it proved that their desire for suffering, for humility, was no vain boast. Angélique wrote to Arnauld on the eve of his condemnation by the Sorbonne (1655): "The joy and holy quietude with which I witnessed you go forth to suffer what God may please, so charmed my mind that it effaced all human fears such as natural affection and the tenderness I have always had for my poor little brother would have engendered, by the thought of ills he will be called upon to suffer, but which will turn into true blessings. . . . If your name is blotted from among the doctors it will be the more surely

inscribed in the book of God. . . . Whatever happens, my dearest father, God will be with you, and you will serve Him better by your sufferings than by your writings."

The persecution of Port-Royal was, however, for a time interrupted by an event which the Mère Angélique, the nuns and the recluses of Port-Royal, the Church and the world in general, accounted a miracle. A priest, a relative of the Mère Angélique, had a great devotion in collecting relics. He acquired, Angélique tells us, a thorn from the Crown of Thorns, and he sent it, enclosed in a crystal shrine, to the nuns of Port-Royal. Now there was a little girl ten years old, a boarder at that time in the convent, who had a malignant growth on the left side of her face. The nun in charge touched the spot with the case containing the relic, and the child was cured. Seven physicians and a surgeon gave a certificate that the cure surpassed the ordinary powers of nature ; the Archbishop of Paris pronounced the cure a miracle. The relic was passed to other communities. Henrietta Maria, once Queen of England, made a pilgrimage to it, and it was believed to have effected at least eighty cures. " The heart of the Queen was touched," says Racine, " by God's visible protection of these poor nuns." Pascal writes of the miracle in his sixteenth letter : " We hear His voice (the voice of Jesus Christ) at this very hour—that holy and terrible voice that astounds all nature and consoles the Church ; and I fear, my fathers (he is addressing

the Jesuits), that those who harden their hearts and obstinately refuse to listen to Him when He speaks as their God, will be condemned to listen in terror when He speaks as their Judge."

Only for three short years, however, did Port-Royal know peace. The Pope declared that the Five Propositions *were* to be found in the "Augustinus," and a synod of the clergy of France drew up a formulary of submission to the Pope's decree, which ecclesiastics, nuns and even schoolmasters were to be compelled to sign. No mental reservation was possible now; to sign was to condemn Jansen and to condemn Saint-Cyran. By open ways and hidden ways the Jesuits worked upon the young King, Louis XIV., urging him to exact obedience, or enforce extreme penalties. The aim of Louis was to achieve uniformity in the State, and he recognized the Jansenists as a disturbing element. In 1660 he announced his intention of entirely extirpating Jansenism. The schools were broken up; the recluses dispersed; the formulary insisted upon. The nuns of Port-Royal de Paris would only sign after putting some precautionary lines at the head. Many of the nuns at Port-Royal des Champs refused their signatures, and suffered horrible imprisonment. Jacqueline Pascal, torn between her duty to the Church, and her loyalty to what she believed to be the truth, died of a broken heart. Evils crowded upon the unhappy nuns thick and fast; on the 23rd April 1661, the sisters of Paris were bidden to send away all their pensionnaires in three

days. There were thirty-three of these in Paris, and about as many at Port-Royal des Champs. Many of the girls were orphans, and had known no other love but that of the nuns. There were heart-breaking scenes at parting. Angélique, who was at Port-Royal des Champs, hastened to Paris to give her support to the sisterhood there. She was then seventy years old. Her last words to d'Andilly are recorded. They spoke together as she was about to get into the carriage outside the convent gates.

"Farewell, brother," she said; "whatever comes, be of good courage."

"Do not fear for me, sister," he replied, "I have plenty of courage."

"Ah, brother, brother, let us be humble," she answered; "we must remember that though humility without firmness may be cowardly, yet courage without humility is presumption."

On the 4th of May 1661, the nuns of Port-Royal were commanded to send away the novices and the postulants, and forbidden to receive any in the future. "At length our good Lord has seen fit to deprive us of all," Angélique wrote to Madame de Sevigné, "fathers, sisters, disciples, children—all are gone. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

"Fathers, sisters, disciples, children—all are gone." This, then, was the end of Angélique's life of heroic renunciation and endeavour. The aims she had lived for, the reforms she had striven for, were trampled in the dust and spit upon; the men

and women and children she had loved and prayed for were snatched out of her hands and given up to cruel persecution. And that by the hand of the Church she revered and adored, in whose fold alone she believed salvation was to be found! Shame, aclumny, insult, were heaped upon this feeble and dying old woman. But her courage never failed her, her faith never wavered. "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Angélique is summed up in these few words of hers. They sufficed her amid chaos, failure, ruin, agony. They supported her in the terrors of death, of which she had always an overpowering dread. Peace came to her before the end, and a large trust in the mercy of God. She died in August 1661.

"Pure as angels, they are proud as devils." This was the verdict of the Archbishop of Paris on the nuns of Port-Royal. But it was rather purification than purity they sought—purification from the disease of sin that affected every mortal being. The call of Port-Royal was a call to repentance—a call, stern, insistent, reaching soul after soul that thirsted for holiness. And Port-Royal—if we penetrate down to the innermost kernel of all—was the Mère Angélique; it was her inspiration that made it what it was, that drew the devout women and the grave men out of the whirlpool of frivolity that they might seek to win a higher reality. It was her influence that sent a thrill over the national life, reawakening faith in spiritual things. To many the doctrine that she taught, the aspect of God that

she insisted upon is repellent, impossible. But it is a doctrine that has been held by many noble men and women, who have shaped their lives with unflinching heroism to its demands. The soul of the Mère Angélique radiated out through her nuns, through her recluses, and through the world, and though the framework of her labour perished, and she went to the grave with the noise of its falling in her ears, it is not for us to say that her sincere, selfless life was in vain. "Let those be fierce against you," says St Augustine, "who know not with what toil the truth is discovered—with what difficulty the eye of the inner man is made sound—what sighs and groans it costs in ever so small a degree to understand God."

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THE REGENT

By ARNOLD BENNETT, Author of 'Clayhanger.'

In his new novel Mr. Bennett brings Edward Henry Machin (the familiar 'Card' of the Five Towns) up to London on a rather adventurous theatrical enterprise—he, in fact, builds and runs a theatre—and the peculiar Five Towns temperament is thus displayed in full contrast with the quite different temperament of artistic and social London. Both the London and the provincial scenes are treated in the same vein of humorous realism which distinguished Mr. Bennett's previous novel, *The Card*. Not the least important among the feats of the hero is a flying trip to the United States. At the end of the story, although Alderman Machin has carried his enterprise to a most successful conclusion, and in a double sense finds all London at his feet, he decides that for his own private purposes the metropolis is an inferior place to the Five Towns—and acts accordingly.

CHANCE

By JOSEPH CONRAD, Author of 'The Nigger of the "Narcissus."'

THE GOVERNOR OF ENGLAND

By MARJORIE BOWEN, Author of 'I Will Maintain.'

The story opens in the fields outside St. Ives, where a gentleman farmer, Oliver Cromwell, struggling with religious melancholy, becomes convinced that he is to be raised up for God's work. The next chapters deal with the dramatic prologue to the Civil War, the fall of the great Strafford and his desertion by the King. Cromwell then steps forward to defy Charles by demanding that the power of the sword be vested in the Parliament, and the first part ends with the King raising the royal standard at Nottingham. The second and third parts deal with the first and second Civil War, ending with the death of the King. The fourth part opens with the election of Cromwell as 'Governor of England' and closes with his death, on the anniversary of Dunbar and Worcester.

THE GOLDEN BARRIER

By AGNES and EGERTON CASTLE, Authors of 'If Youth but Knew.'

The main theme of this romance is the situation created by the marriage —a marriage of love—of a comparatively poor man, proud, chivalrous and tender, to a wealthy heiress: a girl of refined and generous instincts, but something of a wayward 'spoilt child,' loving to use the power which her fortune gives her to play the *Lady Mæcenas* to a crowd of impecunious flatterers, fortune hunters, and unrecognised geniuses. On a critical occasion, thwarted in one of her mad schemes of patronage by her husband, who tries to clear her society of these sycophants and parasites, she petulantly taunts him with having been a poor man himself who, happily, married money. Outraged in his love and pride, he offers her the choice of coming to share his poverty or of living on, alone, amid her luxuries. There begins a conflict of wills between these two, who remain in love with each other—prolonged naturally, and embittered, by the efforts of the interested hangers-on to keep the inconvenient husband out of *Lady Mæcenas'* house—but ending in a happy surrender on both sides.

THE FLYING INN

By G. K. CHESTERTON.

THE WAY HOME

By the Author of 'The Wild Olive.'

This is the story, minutely and understandingly told, of a sinner, his life and death. He is an ordinary man and no hero, and the final issue raised concerns the right of one who has persistently disregarded religion during his strength in accepting its consolations when his end is near: a question of interest to every one. The book, however, is not a tract, but a very real novel.

THE MORNING'S WAR

By C. E. MONTAGUE, Author of 'A Hind Let Loose.'

The love story of a young Anglo-Irish man and woman, both of high spirit, courage, and generosity. It opens with an exciting experience in the Alps, and is carried on through many adventures, of the body or the mind, among the Surrey hills, in the Northern England of smoke and moorland, and on the Western Irish coast, where the discovery of a strange impediment to their union leads to new vicissitudes of peril and hope that leave the issue still in the balance till the end of the last chapter.

A NEW NOVEL

By 'Q' (Sir ARTHUR T. QUILLER-COUCH), Author of 'The Mayor of Troy.'

BELOW STAIRS

By Mrs. A. SIDGWICK, Author of 'Lamorna.'

This, as the title indicates, is a story of servant life. It follows the fortunes of Priscilla Day, who begins as a little morning drudge and in time becomes a trained parlour-maid. Her working experiences and her love affairs are both kept in view, and the author tries to describe them from the girl's standpoint, but without bias either for servants or against them.

THE SEA CAPTAIN

By H. C. BAILEY, Author of 'The Lonely Queen.'

One of the great company of Elizabethan seamen is the hero of this novel. There is, however, no attempt at glorifying him or his comrades. Mr. Bailey has endeavoured to mingle realism with the romance of the time. Captain Rymingtowne is presented as no crusader, but something of a merchant, something of an adventurer, and a little of a pirate. He has nothing to do with the familiar tales of the Spanish main and the Indies. His voyages were to the Mediterranean when the Moorish corsairs were at the height of their power, and of them and their great leaders Kheyr-éd-din Barbarossa and Dragut Reis the story has much to tell. Captain Rymingtowne was concerned in the famous Moorish raid to capture the most beautiful woman in Europe, and in the amazing affair of the Christian prisoners at Alexandria. The author has tried to present with historical truth many unfamiliar phases of the life of the time, in an English countryside, on shipboard, and in the turbulent warfare of the Mediterranean, but the book is essentially a story of adventure.

SANDY MARRIED

By DOROTHEA CONYERS, Author of 'Sally.'

This is a sequel to Mrs. Conyers' famous book, *Strayings of Sandy*. It tells of Sandy married, his life in Ireland, and the amusing complications which arise when he is left guardian of two young and unsporting people, Araminta and Hildebrand, who against their wishes have to keep a racing

stable and win the Grand National or marry before they can claim their uncle's large fortune. Sandy's keeping of their racing stud and hunters and his final triumph in getting rid of his obnoxious charges makes the plot of the book. 'Phillips,' his valet, is as much to the fore as in the *Strayings of Sandy*.

THE SECOND-CLASS PASSENGER

By PERCEVAL GIBBON, Author of 'Margaret Harding.'

The story from which this volume takes its title is that by which Mr. Gibbon is best known. The book presents a representative selection of the work of what *Punch* has called 'one of the best living short story writers.'

THE REMINGTON SENTENCE

By W. PETT RIDGE, Author of 'Devoted Sparkes.'

In his new novel Mr. Pett Ridge describes the experiences of a family brought up amid leisurely and easy surroundings in the country, and directed to earn their living in town. The opening stages take place in Chalk Farm, and the way that each of the Remingtons is affected by the 'sentence' is told in Mr. Pett Ridge's happy and vivacious manner.

THE SUMMER LADY

By Mrs. GEORGE NORMAN, Author of 'Lady Fanny.'

This story tells how a rather friendless young man, returning from Rhodesia, with money, takes a wooden hut for the summer upon the cliffs he remembers as a child. There his solitude is romantically disturbed by a Lady. Their acquaintance, somewhat unconventionally, ripens. She is not, as he thought, unmarried, but the châtelaine of the manor house owned by a quite elderly if charming man. The story of the younger couple develops to a logical conclusion.

ONCE, OF THE ANGELS.

By EVELYN BEACON.

In this story, by a passionately sincere lover of purity, an appeal is made for the better instruction of our daughters, that they may be the better safeguarded against certain of the dangers of life. The subject is a delicate one, but the author has brought to it devotion and conviction.

THE LITTLE NUGGET

By P. G. WODEHOUSE.

When Elmer Ford, the American millionaire, obtained his incompatibility-of-temperament divorce from Mrs. Elmer Ford, the court gave him custody of Ogden, their twelve-year-old son, whom he proceeded to place at a private school in England. How Ogden became the 'Little Nugget,' the greatest prize open to members of the kidnapping profession, the story proceeds to show.

THE TWO KISSES

By OLIVER ONIONS, Author of 'Good Boy Seldom.'

One of these kisses is given to Amory Towers, Bohemian and artist, the other was given by her. In a former novel the author depicted the life of the cheaper studios as it is lived by men; here he treats of that life as a woman-artist experiences it. The position of women in the Arts to-day receives some consideration in the book, and, parallel with that of Amory herself, there runs the story of her friend, studio companion and fellow-student at the McGrath School of Art. *The Two Kisses* may be described as a comedy, and contains the history of a very modern courtship indeed.

TIDE MARKS

By MARGARET WESTRUP (Mrs. W. Sydney Stacey), Author of 'Elizabeth in Retreat.'

Yet another of the many recent novels which have Cornwall for a background. The heroine is the child of a gipsy mother and an ascetic poet, and the theme of the story is the wilful avoidance of love by this girl.

THE ROMANCE OF A FEW DAYS

By PUTNAM WEALE, Author of 'The Revolt.'

This story treats of the subtle adventures of a young Englishman, Richard Faulconbridge, in the strangely fascinating city of Moscow, where the mediævalism of the Kremlin is contrasted with a wildly modern note, probably unequalled elsewhere in Europe. A broad vein of romance runs through these stirring pages. The figure of a Polish girl forms a tantalising and captivating element, and in her company are a number of others who serve to throw into relief the curious plot of the book.

MAN AND WOMAN

By L. G. MOBERLY.

This story, which is based upon Tennyson's lines—

"The woman's cause is man's, they rise or fall together"—

has for its chief character a woman who takes the feminist view that man is the enemy; a view from which she is ultimately converted. Another prominent character is one whose love is given to a weak man, her axiom being that love takes no heed of the worthiness or unworthiness of its object. The scene is laid partly in London, partly in a country cottage, and partly in India during the Durbar of the King-Emperor.

WHAT IS LOVE?

By DAVID LISLE, Author of 'A Painter of Souls,' 'A Kingdom Divided.'

Mr. Lisle's new novel may be regarded as a sequel to his successful *Painter of Souls*, since the heroine of *What is Love?* is the daughter of Miles Dering and Violet Hilliard. In this book we find brilliant and daringly intimate descriptions of theatre-life in Paris. A famous French actress is the friend and patron of Isola Dering, and Mr. Lisle displays remarkable knowledge of behind-the-scenes life on the Paris stage in his delineation of 'La Belle Gerome's' character and career.

THE MYSTERY OF DR. FU-MANCHU

By SAX ROHMER.

The epic of the most resourceful, brilliant and sinister malefactor yet created. Through River Police depots, an opium den in Shadwell, great hotels, the *Arabian Nights* abode of the Chinese doctor, the floating laboratory on the lower Thames, the family vault of Lord Southery, and many another scene, we follow the dark elusive figure of the terrible Fu-Manchu, 'lord of strange deaths.' In the dim background flit ever the companion figures of his creatures, the stranglers. Above all rises the call of the dacoit: whilst through the yellow phantasmagoria glides a seductive personality, 'Kâramanèh,' the lovely Eastern slave who plays such havoc with the heart of Dr. Petrie.

SWIRLING WATERS

By MAX RITTENBERG, Author of 'The Mind-Reader.'

This is a story of the whirlpool of finance. Clifford Matheson, a successful financier, is soul-weary of the life, and tries to cut loose and start a fresh existence. He is drawn back to the whirlpool by an entanglement in a huge scheme engineered by a millionaire shipowner (a vivid study of the Napoleonic temperament); and Matheson's wife and the girl he falls in love with in his second existence contend for him. The book starts with a dramatic conflict between Matheson and the shipowner, and continues in the atmosphere of tension right to the end.

THE GATE OF HORN

By BEULAH MARIE DIX.

It is through the Gate of Horn that true dreams come, and they were true dreams that came to Sydney Considine. Through her childhood and her girlhood she has known in her dreams places and people that were unfamiliar to her waking hours. In early womanhood she left her American home for a visit in Cornwall, and there she found the scene of her dream life, and met the man who had shared it with her. The rest of the story tells how they made reality of unreality.

THE LODGER

By Mrs. BELLOC LOWNDES.

In her new long novel, Mrs. Belloc Lowndes shows the same mastery of the art of thrilling that she showed both in *The Chink in the Armour*, and in her short stories *Studies in Love and in Terror*. *The Lodger* suggests a solution of the most dreadful and baffling of all the unsolved murder mysteries in English criminal annals, but the story is relieved by humour, observation of human nature, and a pretty love interest.

SHALLOWS

By FREDERICK WATSON.

There is an episode in Jacobite history that has probably never been treated in fiction, and was only known within recent years through the brilliant research of Mr. Andrew Lang. The Elibank plot and the tragedy of Archibald Cameron lay ready to the novelist's hand, and it has remained for Mr. Frederick Watson, a son of Ian Maclaren, to set this sombre background to a study of character. In Ethlenn Murdoch the mystery of inevitable misfortune is played, and the linking of her fate and that of Charles Edward Stewart is accomplished. The story is full of incident, breaks new ground, and is charged with the atmosphere of twilight, the time of shadows and falling darkness.

THAT WHICH WAS WRITTEN

By SYBIL CORMACK SMITH.

This story, the work of one of the increasing band of South African writers, is written round the secret tragedy of a woman's life, the action of fate in revealing that secret, and the ultimate triumph of love in disregarding the revelation. In the vivid, romantic setting of the *veld*, strong situations and characters are evolved, and the climax is reached when two men come to grips in the fight for a woman's soul.

MISS NOBODY

By ETHEL CARNIE, Author of 'Songs of a Factory Girl.'

A story of modern working class life, laid partly in Manchester city and partly in a green country place skirting its greyness. The heroine, with no heritage but that of grit, grace, and gumption, marries to escape a life of drudgery She finds that struggle and pain dwell also in the country. The scorn of the country-people drives her back, alone, to her own place. Passing through many phases, meeting many people, she learns all the sweetness and bitterness of playing a lone hand.

STEMPENYU

By SHALOM ALEICHEM. Translated from the Yiddish by HANNAH BERMAN.

The hero of this very curious Jewish romance is a wandering musician of many romantic adventures, who was caught, as in a trap, by a woman with whom he has nothing in common. Too late, he meets his affinity in the pure young girl, Rachel. The pen pictures of the quaint village folks are illumined by countless flashes of humour. A vein of tenderness and pity for Stempenyu no less than for Rachel runs through the book; and over all hovers the spirit of geniality and kindliness. Its profound sincerity, its keen insight, and its accurate characterisation lift the book far above the commonplaceness and banalities of the average novel.

THE WHITE THREAD

By ROBERT HALIFAX, Author of 'A Whistling Woman.'

A book which is practically certain to arrest a serious consideration, both lay and medical. Tilly Westaway herself—the lovable, human little heroine with her secret maternal longings and her desire to 'put everything right for everybody'—makes a curiously moving appeal all the way. But it is the vast shadow in the background—the menace of the ever-absorbing, ever-expanding lunatic asylum ward—which will remain in one's mind long after the book is laid down. If Robert Halifax has not struck here an entirely new note in fiction, it may well be that, in view of a 'Mental Deficients'' Bill now before the country, he has struck one that will be heard far and wide.

LOVE'S APPRENTICESHIP

By MABEL SPRENT.

The story of a little wild bush girl, and how she hears the mysterious voices of the great world calling to her. She leaves the solitude of her home in the wilderness and, driven by a hitherto starved passion for worldly experience, joins recklessly in the chase after sensation and pleasure. The story concerns itself with the action and reactions between sophisticated life, conventional adventure, and a natural young person who grew to womanhood without knowledge of these things.

A GODDESS OF STONE

By R. W. WRIGHT HENDERSON, Author of 'John Goodchild.'

The scene of this romance is on the south coast, and the date of it is 1793, in the brave days of smuggling and rumours of invasion. It is told in the first person, being the recollection of events witnessed by one Thomas How when an innocent boy of eight. A miser, some smugglers, an emigré, an old housekeeper, and others are those whose fortunes he, and a marble statue, silently watch, and in part direct.

KNOCKINSCREEN DAYS

By JACKSON C. CLARK. With 4 Illustrations by A. E. HORNE.

In this story Mr. 'Peter' Carmichel, who lives near the Ulster village of Knockinscreen, relates humorously the circumstances attending the arrival of an erratic friend and their somewhat unusual methods of canvassing in the election of the Ballyraffin dispensary doctor, which involve the discomfiture of the Royal Irish Constabulary. The assistance of a local blacksmith is requisitioned at the eleventh hour, and in the concluding chapters he narrates the result of his electioneering efforts. There are incidental descriptions of a local football match contested on Homeric lines and the celebration of St. Patrick's Day. Jimmy M'Gaw, a manservant with original ideas, enlivens things more than a little.

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